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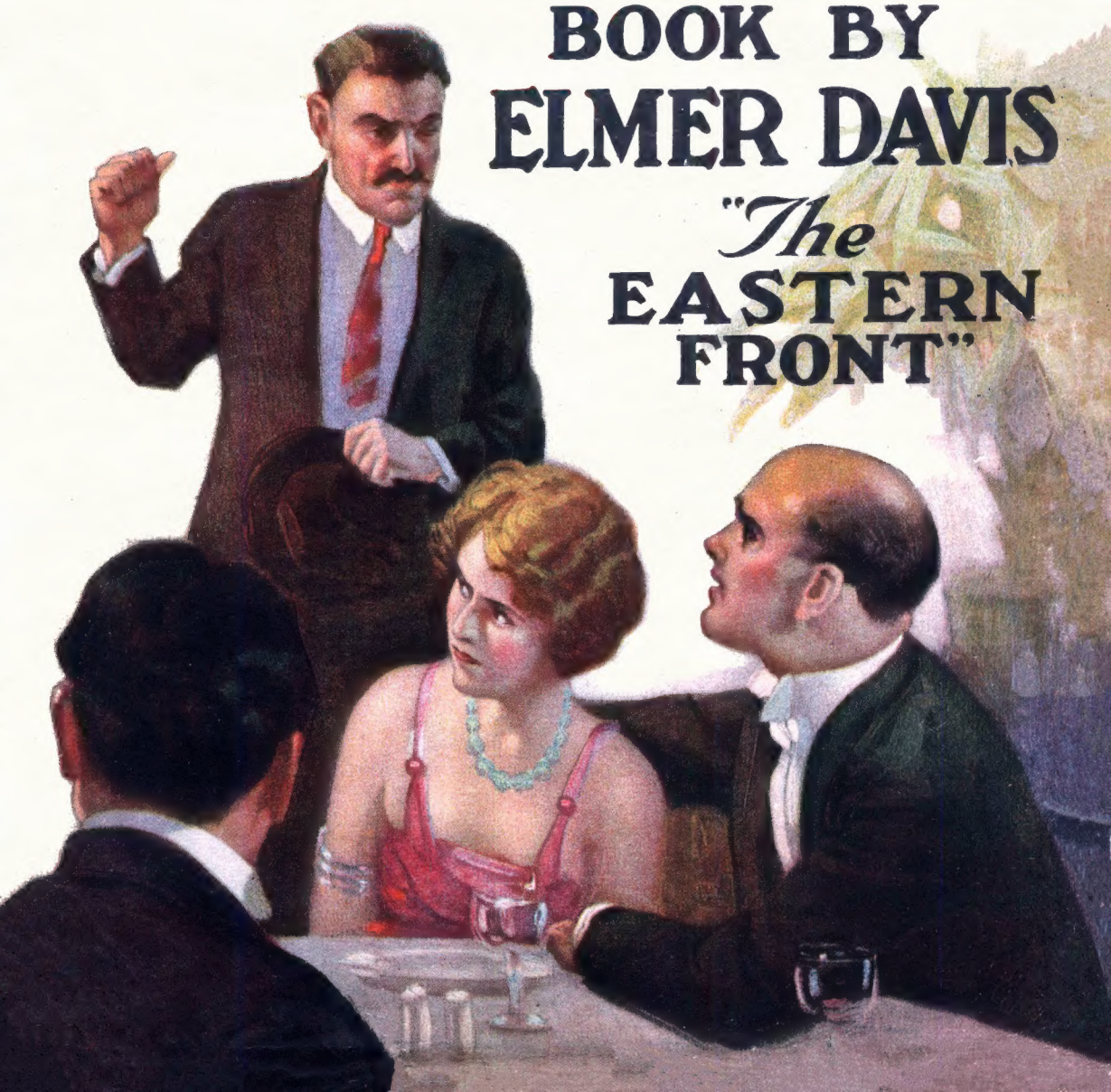

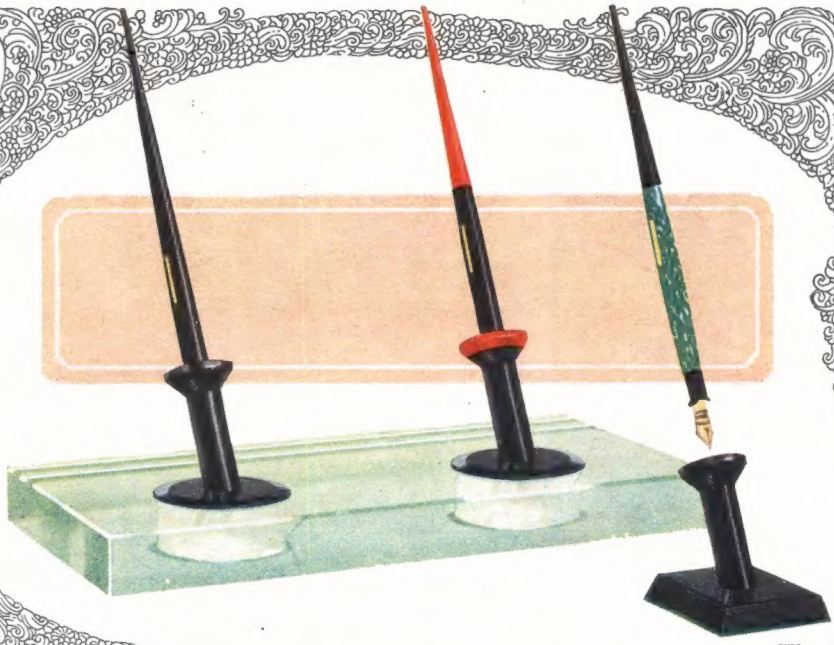

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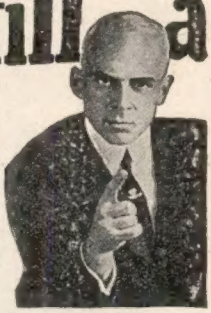

L. L. COOKE
Chief Engineer

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The complete book to be published in the next issue of POPULAR is "Rubies," by L. Adams Beck, a dramatic, interesting story of adventure in the glamorous, eternally fascinating Far East. Tell your news dealer to put aside a copy of POPULAR for you.

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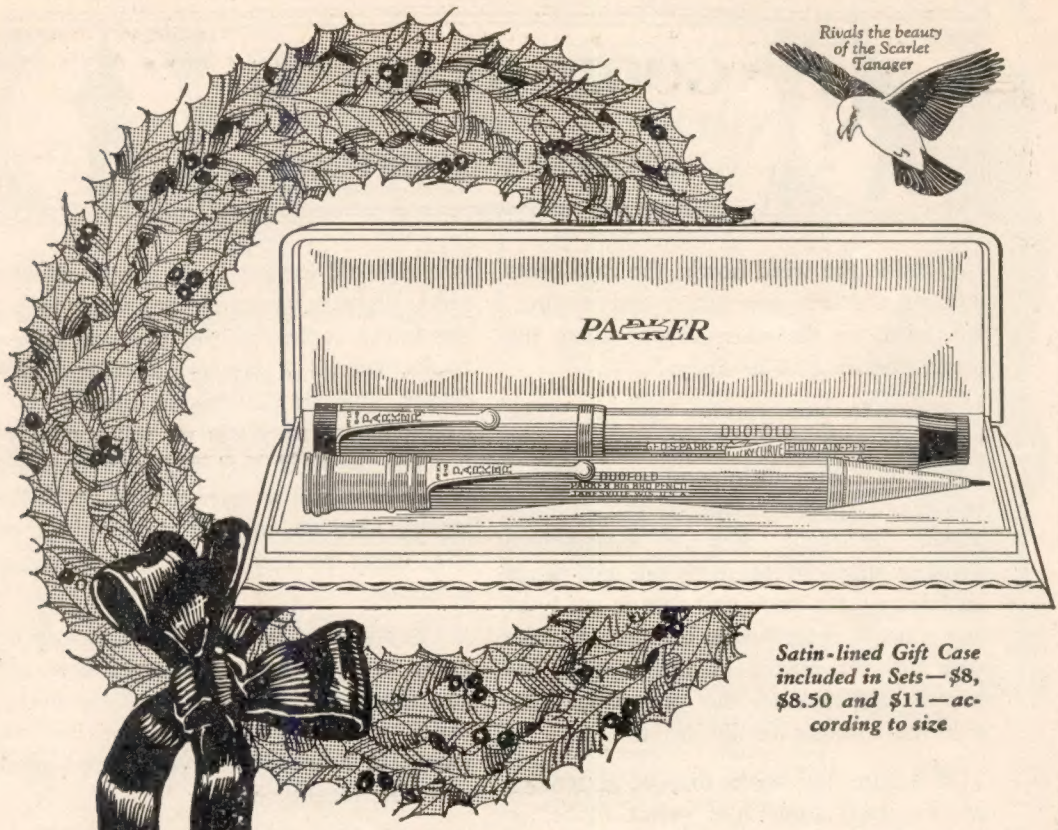

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GOOD READING

BY

CHARLES HOUSTON

Outside the wind howls, the rain beats against the window; men and women, overtaken by the storm, hurry along the streets bending to its fury.

But as for you, you are cruising in the tropic warmth of the South Seas, or galloping on a wiry little pony across Western plains to the rescue of the sweetest girl in the world. For you have before you the magic of printer's ink and paper that is called a book and that is ready at any time, if it knows its business, to take you into the realms of imagination, romance, and mystery that are mapped inside the author's fertile brain.

It is true that books may be as tedious as life itself sometimes seems to be, or again they may serve to stir your deepest emotions, set free the fine instincts of courage and manhood that are in all of us.

It is of books like these last that I am thinking as I write this—books that are made not necessarily to inform and educate but to stir and thrill. One of the oldest and best-established publishers in this country—Chelsea House, at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City—has found the way to the hearts of the American people by publishing the sort of books we are all hungry for, and publishing them at a price that is within the reach of all of us. The other day I stood in a store which sells these Chelsea House books, both in the seventy-five-cent and two-dollar editions, and I asked the clerk what sort of people bought these books.

"All sorts," was his answer. "There is a rich old banker down the block who sends his man around every week to get the latest copies of the Chelsea House books, there's a lawyer, a college professor, and an advertising man in this neighborhood to whom we sell regularly; but for the most part our customers are young men and women coming up in the world, anxious for the good things of life, eager to escape from monotonous existence."

"Youth must be served," as the saying goes, and the books reviewed here are for the young of America—not necessarily for the young in years but the young in heart who have not lost their zest for adventure.

A GIRL AGAINST ODDS, a Love Story by Marcia Montaigne, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

The girl, walking carelessly down a wooded road that led from her humble home, suddenly fell back startled with a cry of fear. The crumpled form of a man lay huddled on the bridle path in front of her. He was dressed in well-cut riding clothes and had evidently been thrown from his horse. That girl's discovery set into action a train of circumstances that make up one of the most charming and at the same time exciting love stories that it has been our fortune to come upon for these many moons. Here was a girl in the most moderate circumstances stumbling into the life of the owner of a vast estate, falling passionately in love with him and finding on every hand barriers to the course of her love. It is enough to tell you that she surmounts these barriers and comes out triumphant in the end. You must get this book for yourself if you like action mixed with your romance.

(Continued on 2nd page following.)

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A FASCINATING BOOK of Detective stories that shows how ordinary boys and men have won nationwide fame, thousands of dollars in rewards, and important official positions by solving finger print mysteries!

" . . . Shortly before midnight a young couple slipped away from the dance. They sought out a long, low, rakish roadster. With powerful headlights picking out the path, it moved cautiously through the parking space and out onto the high road.

"Early next morning—a farm boy found the girl's dead body crumpled in the wayside ditch. Concealed in the bushes at the side of the road lay the boy's lifeless body, also shot from behind."

Who had committed the murder?

Read the rest of the story on page 15 of our new Finger Print book. Find out how the murderers were traced, tried and convicted, and how a certain finger print expert solved five murder mysteries and secured 97 convictions in less than a year.

Find out how you can become a Finger Print Expert.

Thirteen Thrilling Stories of Mystery and Achievement

Thirteen stories of crime, daring robberies, mysterious murders, thrilling escapes. You'll enjoy "Snowflakes," a great dope story—"The Invisible Finger Print," a blackmail mystery.

In "Foiled," a true account of a great political coup, you'll read of the astounding rise of a young country photographer who saved the Mayor of his city and was later appointed to the most important identification position in the state.

You'll read of men who achieved fame, big rewards and important positions in a short time through the study of finger prints.

Any man who can read and write can become a finger print expert.

PARTIAL LIST

Graduates U. of A. S. Recently appointed Finger Print Experts of these States, Cities and Institutions.

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This book cannot be bought at any newsstand or bookstore—but it will be sent to you FREE if you write to us at once. Thirty-two pages, illustrated in color with weird crime pictures. This book explains your opportunities in the finger print world—shows how you can get your training in a few months—tells how you can get a professional finger print outfit free. Write for this book today.

University of Applied Science
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Please send me free your 32-page illustrated book "Finger Prints." I understand that there is absolutely no obligation. Also tell me how I can become a finger print expert by studying a few months in spare time—and how I can get a professional finger print outfit *free*.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

A Seaside Mystery, a Detective Story by Christopher B. Booth, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

Seaside was a pretty little summer colony near New York, conventional enough to all outward appearances. But it had among its well-to-do and eminently respectable residents others of a more colorful and racy character. There was the good-natured bootlegger's wife for example, and Babs Lane, the girl about whom there seemed to hang a mystery. When the hand bag of one of the aristocrats was stolen from the porch of the clubhouse, this strangely mixed group found itself plunged into a tragic situation. Then along came Jim Bliss, just a slow, plodding, painstaking detective, no Sherlock Holmes or superman about Jim. Nevertheless by the use of common sense and a keen understanding of human nature, Jim was able to solve a problem that had me, for one, guessing through every page of this fascinating book. My advice is to follow Jim down all the crooked paths that led from the country-club porch, and before you read the last three or four chapters put down your answers to the questions the author poses. Then finish the book and see if you come out where Jim did.

Around the World in Eighty Hours, an Adventure Story by William Wallace Cook, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

Though the feet of America are planted firmly on the ground ever so many of us have our eyes in the air these days. Despite all the progress that our flyers have made there is a whole new world to be explored up above us. What a subject for writers of fiction!—man's ever-increasing conquest of the air. And how few have been able to get the sweep and adventure that go on wings. Well, here is William Wallace Cook for one, who has done it to the queen's taste. In "Around the World in Eighty Hours" he has written an epic of the air lanes that is memorable. Here is the story of a race around the world by airplane, a bonus of one hundred thousand dollars for David Whitley if he should complete the trip within a week and finish ahead of his unscrupulous rival. It is a story that zooms along like a racing plane, taking you with it at a speed that you would never dream possible either in airplanes or in fiction. By all means let Mr. Cook take you for the ride of your life.

All the books reviewed above are priced at seventy-five cents and are to be had at any reputable dealer's. In addition to these, Chelsea House publishes regularly, two-dollar novels that you will be proud to have in your library. These are new, full length, and written by masters in their profession. Here, for example, is one of them.

Terror Island, by Frank Carruthers, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price $2.

Time and again you have read of a man and a woman cast away on a desert island. "Old stuff," you say. Yes, old stuff, as old as Robinson Crusoe and other stories that kept you awake long after bedtime when you were a wide-eyed youngster. And only in that respect—namely, that it is as old as romance itself—is "Terror Island" like anything that you have read before. Mr. Carruthers has distilled the very essence of romance for your delight in this masterful book. As he writes he takes the reader with him to an island of mystery and enchantment where adventure abounds and the unexpected is always happening. It is our bet that not since you were a kid have you read a book that will stir you so strongly as this smashing story.

Wooden Guns, by George Owen Baxter, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price $2.

This is the story of a bluff—a desperate one played by a desperate man who dared not lose his reputation as a gun fighter. It is a story filled with galloping horses, quick shooting, keen-eyed men and girls of the sort that only the great West can rear. You will never regret the time you spend turning the pages of "Wooden Guns," and when you have finished you will say to yourself as I did, "Why don't writing people give us more stories like this?" Big Jim, the hero of this yarn, is one of the finest figures that ever rode a pony up a Western horizon, and whenever he appears on the scene there's action galore. Get to know him in this book—he's a friend worth having.

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The work involves planning requirements for a manufacturing plant. Must also have the ability to supervise the selection, arrangement and installation of Plant Equipment. Submit complete resume. Replies held confidential. Location, Chicago. (Name on request.)

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DANZIG STAMPS FREE—Splendid assortment Independent State Danzig—2c postage. Midland Stamp Company, Toronto, Canada.

Farm Lands

HERE'S YOUR LAND! $10 down and $10 a month buys 20 acres of my best land in Cent. Mich. for $400 or 10 acres for $250. Write at once for free 48-page picture book. G. W. Swigart, X1265 1st Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

Salesmen Wanted

MAKE $100 WEEKLY IN SPARE TIME. Sell what the public wants—long distance radio receiving sets. Two sales weekly pays $100 profit. No big investment, no canvassing. Sharpe of Colorado made $955 in one month. Representatives wanted at once. This plan is sweeping the country—write today before your county is gone. Ozarka, Inc., 128H, West Austin Ave., Chicago.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT. Hosiery and Shoe salesmen can earn $100 a month extra by adding line of specialty slippers. Write Superior Shoe Co., Bangor, Me.

Business Opportunity

BUILD SPLENDID BUSINESS making chipped glass number and name plates. Particulars free. Simplex Co., 1133 Broadway, New York.

GET OUT OF THE RUT. $100 sufficient, learn privilege trading. Dept. 113, Paul Kaye, 149 Broadway, N. Y.

Stammering

ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering Cured at Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 80 Arcade, 1126 Granville Ave., Chicago, Ill.

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PATENTS. Send sketch or model for preliminary examination. Booklet free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 644 G St., Washington, D. C.

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INVENTORS—Write for our guide book, "How to Get Your Patent" and evidence of invention blank. Send model or sketch for Inspection and Instructions Free. Terms reasonable. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

Detectives Wanted

MEN—Experience unnecessary; travel; make secret investigations; reports; salaries; expenses. Write American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis, Mo.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Write, George Wagner, former Government Detective, 1968 Broadway, New York.

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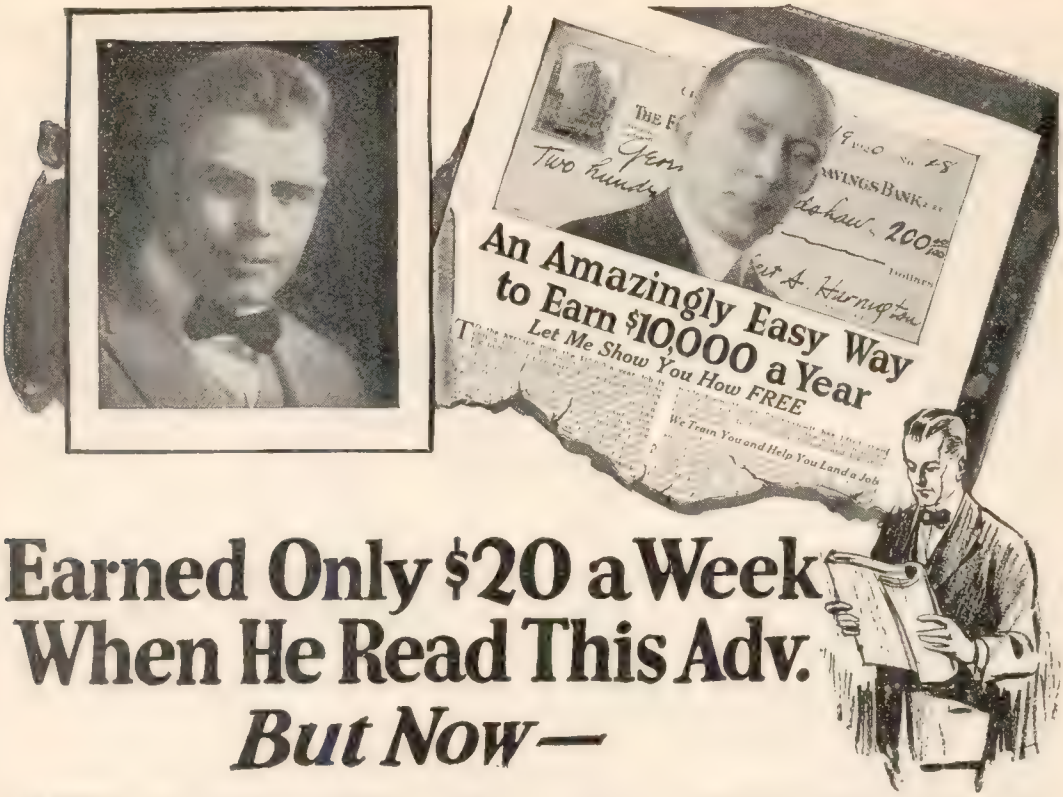
RAILROAD POSTAL CLERKS start $155 month, railroad pass. Send stamps for questions. Columbus Institute, B-3, Columbus, Ohio.



Earned Only $20 a Week When He Read This Adv.

But Now—

BETTER than one thousand dollars a month—every month! $1,350 in one month—$13,500 last year.

And yet when A. H. Ward read the advertisement you see above he was not making more than $20 a week.

Unusual you say! Hundreds of similar incidents—startling successes—amply prove that there is nothing unusual about these big increases in earning power.

There are several more "lucky" instances on this page. But these men were only "lucky" because they did what Ward did. They wanted to get on and were willing to look into the greatest opportunity the world offers any man for making big money. This same opportunity is bigger today than it ever was—a fact that is easily proved.

Requests for nearly 50,000 salesmen received by the Employment Service Department of the National Salesmen's Training Association in twelve months is unquestionable proof of the great demand for trained salesmen.

Some More Big Salary Increases

"After ten years in the railway mail service I decided to make a change. My earnings during the past thirty days were more than $1,000 — W. Hartle, Chicago, Ill.

$554.37 IN ONE WEEK

"Last week my earnings amounted to $554.37, this week will go over $400." — F. Wynn, Portland, Ore.

$12,000 a YEAR

A. H. Ward, Chicago, held a small pay job. Now he averages $12,000 a year as a salesman.

$100 A WEEK IN ONLY 3 MONTHS

H. D. Miller, of Chicago made $100 a month as stenographer in July. In September, three months later, he was making $100 a week as a sales-

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

Don't get the idea there is anything mysterious about the success enjoyed by our members. Most of them had never sold anything in their lives—many of them were firm in the belief that salesmen are "born" and not "made." But they were willing to investigate. And then they learned a few simple secrets that quickly enabled them to become big producers. Immediately they began to make real money. If only a few men had done this you might call it "luck." But thousands have done it. Thousands more will do it. Why not YOU?

Just as you learned the alphabet, so you can learn salesmanship. And through the National Demonstration Method—an exclusive feature of the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training—you gain the equivalent of actual experience while studying.

Years of Selling Experience in a Few Weeks

Reason it out for yourself. Salesmanship is governed by rules and laws. There are certain ways of saying and doing things, certain ways of approaching a prospect to get his undivided attention, certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudice, and make the prospect act. Once you know these rules your success is governed only by your ambitions and energy—a golden future can be yours.

Remarkable Book "Modern Salesmanship" Sent Free

Just keep an open mind until you have read all the remarkable facts in this interesting free book. It will show you how you can quickly and easily become a Master Salesman; how our FREE Employment Department will help you select and secure a good selling position when you are qualified and ready. And it will give you success stories of former routine workers who are now earning big incomes in the selling field. This book costs you nothing, and it may be the turning point in your life, as it was for so many others.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION
Dept. W-4, N. S. T. A., Building, Chicago, Illinois

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Dept. W-4, N. S. T. A., Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Send me your free book, "Modern Salesmanship," and details of your system of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service.

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Address .....

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Age .....Occupation .....

IN THE HOLIDAY ISSUE OF

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The Treasure of Franchard

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The Cabochon Emeralds

A Christmas Novelette

By Charles Agnew MacLean

Other Distinguished Stories by

May Sinclair — **Oscar Wilde**
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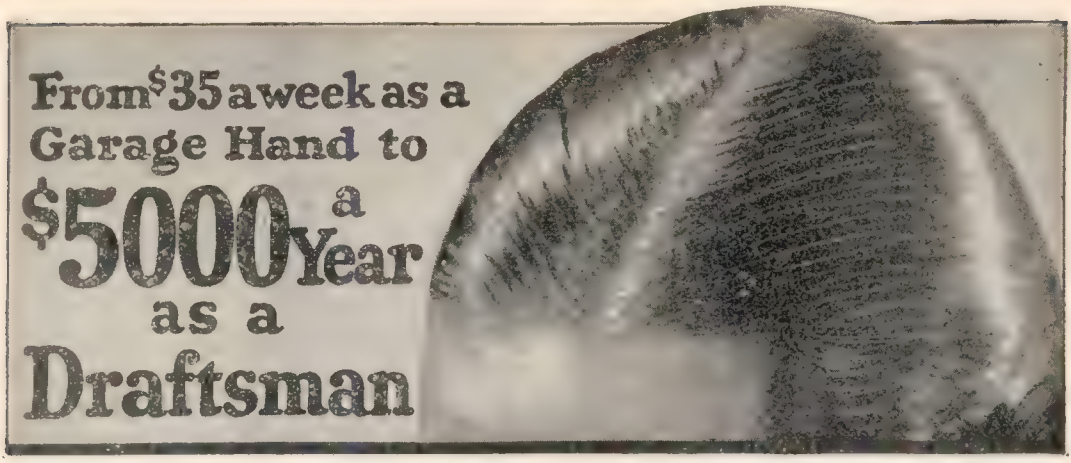

Is He Smarter than YOU?

Do you want a man's size pay envelope? So did this man. Are you a little shy on book learning? This chap never finished eighth grade at school. *But he looked the field over and chose the line nineteen out of twenty Help Wanted ads called for.* He learned the line that's *always* in demand. He wrote to me in February. *By the middle of May he was a draftsman.* Today, my mail brought his photo and the statement, "I've been made Assistant to the Chief Draftsman at $400 a month!"

Six Months is *ample* time for anyone to learn draftsmanship. It's longer than this man studied at home under me! And you need no "talent" for drafting. This student was a garage hand when he started my course! Smart? Yes. *Smart enough to pick the livest line in all industry.*

Get the Better Things of Life

Your Own Home
Would you rather have a correspondence school "diploma"—or a draftsman's salary that will buy a HOME?

Your Own Car
An "automotive expert" can repair a car—but a draftsman can OWN one.

Leisure
A draftsman has leisure hours and the money to enjoy them!

Let Ambition Guide You

—*but don't let it run away.* There are many, many "schools" that teach most anything. Shoot for the line that is practical—*profitable.* Get the knowledge every industry *needs* and is willing to *pay* for.

You Need Only the Will to Start

We have everything required to put you in the high-pay class—*everything but your name and address.* If you clip the coupon *now* and *mail* it—we'll make the next move—by next mail!

REMEMBER, it's *supply and demand* that regulates everyone's pay. What good is a machinist if every shop has a *waiting list* of willing men? What does a head crammed with electricity get you when electrical shops have signs up, "NO HELP WANTED"? But every industry is *clamoring* for draftsmen. (Just check this up in the Want Ad columns of any newspaper.)

JOBS WAITING all over U. S. Every industry uses blueprints by the thousands, as you know. The biggest concerns recruit their draftsmen from our offices. We haven't students enough to go 'round right now—and next Spring the shortage will be worse. Therefore: to induce action, *I'll furnish tools without extra charge.* So, clip coupon NOW.

Train at Home Under My Supervision

—and I'll have you right in the business of *drafting*—the *first hour.* There are no books. No theories. We put the tools in your hands, tell you what they're for, *illustrate* how they're used—and you *begin to draft.* I will have you so interested inside of a week—and so sure of yourself in a month or two—but you'll have to clip the coupon and get the introductory material to see what a pleasant and profitable course is waiting for you!

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Four New Books for Three Dollars

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Books that bear this mark—"CH"—represent a distinct and appealing novelty in the field of Christmas gifts. These dashing stories, all of them written by masters of their art, appear between covers for the first time. You can make no more welcome gift this season than to send your friends four of the titles listed below, put up in a special Christmas package—

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His money was all gone. He was broke, but he would not wager his gun on a turn of the cards. Then the stranger proposed another bet —that Tom should ride to the top of a near-by mountain and light a bonfire, in the event that the cards should go against him on the next deal. Tom accepted the wager—and lost again.

He took the ride and, by so doing, he assumed to himself the personality of the notorious outlaw known as "The Shadow," for the lighting of the beacon was the signal of The Shadow's return. Posses of riders swarmed to the mountain, and Tom was in dire peril. The Shadow's crimes were dastardly and called for swift and certain justice.

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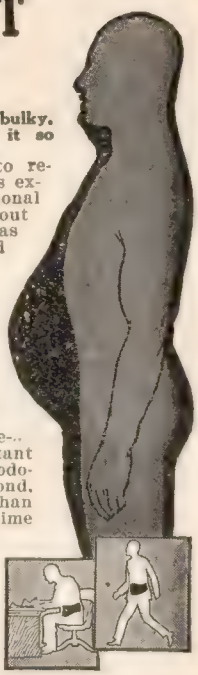

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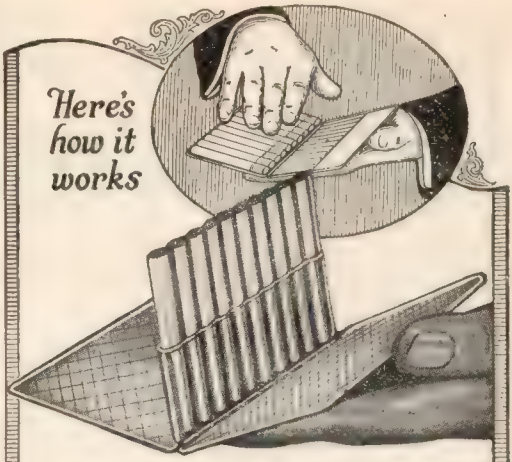

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GENTLEMEN: Having been a reader of the POPULAR for over twenty years, I feel it is a great pleasure to write and congratulate you on that wonderful magazine.

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Editor, POPULAR MAGAZINE,
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DEAR SIR: I believe my subscription for the POPULAR is due. You will have to take gold dust in payment, as it is so infernally hard to get hold of any currency here, without sending to Eagle or Dawson for it. The magazine is worth real gold.

GEO. E. PILZ.

Dear Buddy:

Do you remember saying the other day when we were camping along the Big Muddy, how you wished you could get hold of a good, old-fashioned, red-blooded Western story again?

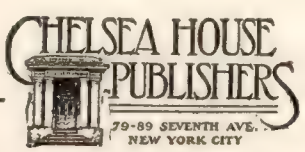
I've found it, Bud. Here's the name. Paste it in your hat—"The Golden Bowl."

It's by our old favorite, Harrison Conrard, and it's all about a bang-up fight for a treasure and a girl on the Arizona desert. No, I'm not even going to give you an outline of the plot. But take my tip and get it to-night.

"The Golden Bowl" is just one of the popular priced, seventy-five-cent books that is for sale at any good dealer's under the "CH" brand, and take it from me, when you see that mark on the jacket of a book you're in for a spell of slick reading.

My best to you, old-timer, and the bunch,

Bill



Give Them Books They Really Want

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SQUATTERS AT DABCHICK LAKE by Emart Kinsburn
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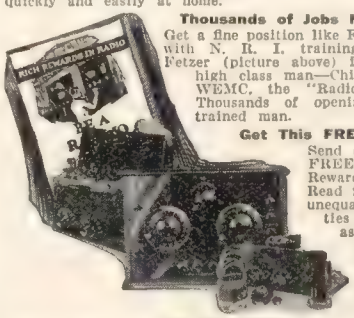

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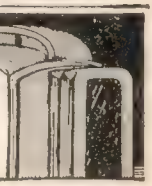

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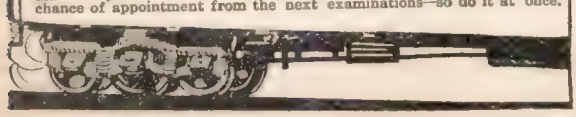

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXVIII DECEMBER 7, 1925 No. 4

The Eastern Front

By Elmer Davis

Author of "The Final Score," "The Winning of Hollisburg," Etc.

The art of successful deception is the peculiar heritage of civilized peoples living in crowded metropolises, where the clock ticks off, not seconds, but overnight fortunes, mushroom careers and astounding acts of brigandage. From the checkered pattern of glare and gloom that shuts out the night above the "Roaring Forties" of New York, the characters of this story are etched in larger-than-life portraits, each trailing a sinister shadow of dual personality.

CHAPTER I.

UP AGAINST IT.

THOU shalt keep up a front." This is the first and great commandment, if you live in New York City. Keep up a front, even if you have something behind it; all the more, if you have not.

Doubtless that is true of other cities as well, but this tale deals only with varieties of the Eastern front. Some few people are so solidly built that the front is only the natural facing of the unshakable structure behind it. Others find the gilded front sufficient; give them a never-failing check book and all things else shall be added unto them.

But luckiest of all are those whose front depends neither on money nor on native worth, but on their own unshakable conviction that they are the people. If others fail to perceive that, so much the worse for the others. They

are the people; their conviction of their own importance swells them out against the pervasive pressure of general disapproval, or general indifference, as an inflated toy balloon resists the pressure of the air.

Julian Reeve had that kind of front. He also had the general esteem of those who knew him and of those who merely heard about him. He had money, too. And he wasted this invaluable combination in the flourishing but moderate-sized city of Royalmont, a thousand miles from New York.

His Cousin Eddie lived in New York, however; and the blackest, bitterest moments in the life of Eddie Reeve were those in which he thought of Julian's universal and inevitable success. Eddie knew he wasn't gifted like Julian. His parents had told him so and Julian's parents had told him so; his teachers in school and professors in the university had told him so; all Royalmont had told him so, and even if nobody had ever told him, Eddie would have known it anyway.

Julian was five years older. Eddie had entered high school just after Julian had left, just when Julian's irritating pomposity had been forgotten, while his athletic prowess, his brilliance in the classroom, his impossible all-round excellence still lived in vivid memory. Eddie had entered the State university just after Julian had left. Because he was Julian's cousin, he got into Julian's fraternity. By his own merit he made the glee club and the staff of the college paper; but what was that to the glory of Julian, football captain and president of the senior class?

Then Julian had inherited the prosperous carpet factory and automatic admission to the directorate of the biggest bank in Royalmont. Eddie inherited only his father's infectious grin and the easy-going temperament that kept his father happy in the useful and improvident life of the general practitioner, the family physician who saves a life every day and waits for his pay.

So, finding Royalmont impossible under Julian's far-reaching shadow, Eddie had come to New York. And now, on this raw rainy winter afternoon when he had lived in New York for six years, he was shivering beside the riser pipe in his furnished room off Madison Square—a room which cost a dollar a week less because it had no radiator. To this he had come after six years in New York—years that had been continually delightful and intermittently prosperous, yet had brought him back, in the end, to exactly such a furnished room as that from which he had started.

Eddie loved New York; he loved it and could be happy in it even though he was broke. He was a bachelor, not wholly from choice. But he was beginning to wonder more and more if he was fast enough for the big town. It sharpened his bitterness to reflect that Julian would have been an even more terrific success in New York than he had been in Royalmont.

Eddie knew the root of his own trouble. He had no front. Nobody took him seriously. He didn't take himself seriously, of course, but he sometimes thought he might have done it if there had only been one loyal friend somewhere to stand by him and second the motion. But there was none; friends he had, but none so loyal as that.

EVEN his name was a curse. "Edwin" was impossible; "Eddie" expressed exactly that affectionate humorous deprecation that everybody felt for him. Also, Eddie was the sort of man who, when he was a press agent, called himself a press agent, not a publicity engineer or a public-relations counsel. Are there differences between a press agent and a public-relations counsel? Certainly. One difference is the front; another is fifteen thousand dollars a year.

But now, he was not even a press agent; he was a playwright whose first play was just flowing off his typewriter and whose last savings were just vanishing into the abyss. And then, when things were bad enough already, had come this letter from his mother.

He looked at it again, frowning:

We are so glad you have left the Minaret. Hotel life is unnatural at best; far better to have your own apartment.

His eyes roved about the six-foot-by-eight hall bedroom which had been represented, in his letters home, as his own apartment. His mother wouldn't have tolerated that furniture, even in the junk room in her attic. The dark and dismal place was redeemed from downright horror only because his cheap dresser was adorned by that big dashing photograph of Marge Lanneaux. His own apartment!

He could get away with it, so long as he was a thousand miles from home. He read on in the letter:

And now for the great news. Your Cousin Julian is at last coming to New York. Absurd that he has never been there in the six years of your residence, but Julian is very conscientious in his attention to business.

This time it is business that brings him. The factory is about to establish a New York office and Julian felt that he should attend the opening in person, to give it a somewhat formal and social touch. Julian has many friends in New York among men of the first importance. He will stay at the Ritz-Carlton, but he is very eager to see you and congratulate you on your success, to see your apartment and be introduced to your circle——

Eddie sighed. The only circle he knew was Columbus Circle. The shifting unorganized society of actors and artists and writers and newspaper men in which he moved might look like a circle from a distance, but seemed to have no form at all when you were in it—like the Milky Way. And the apartment—— But the letter had still other news:

Julian has another errand, too; but I may not speak of that. It is his secret, though everybody knows it; probably you have heard of it from another quarter. At any rate it will make him happy to hear your congratulations first of all. He has always spoken so well of you.

"Yes, damn him," said Eddie, "he always has!"

Julian had always spoken well of him, but with just that shrug, that hint of charitable deprecation, which damned him more thoroughly than the harshest abuse. Julian's kind words, so plainly dutiful and so plainly reluctant, had done more than anything else to keep Royalmont from taking Eddie seriously.

All right, so long as Julian was in Royalmont and Eddie in New York. There must be dozens of ex-Royalmonters in Manhattan, but Eddie knew none except Marge Lanneaux, whose opinion of Julian was about the same as his own. Her opinion of Eddie, too, was about the same as Eddie's; which was the reason why she was still Marge Lanneaux in spite of several invitations to become Marge Reeve.

But now Julian was coming to New York—coming on the following day. At last he had tracked Eddie down. He would stay at the Ritz, consort with millionaires and socially registered persons; but he would want to see Eddie's apartment and Eddie's circle, that he might go home and speak well of them with a deprecating shrug. A month ago, as press agent for the Minaret Hotel, living in the smart two-room suite that went with his job, Eddie could have held up his head. But it needed no shrug of Julian's to shame him now.

HE could leave town, of course; but Julian would guess why he had left town. If he didn't guess the truth, he would guess worse than the truth; he would go back to Royalmont and intimate—without ever quite saying it—that Eddie lived a rum-sodden life and

had left town to escape being discovered.

Besides, Eddie couldn't leave town. His check book showed a bank balance of forty-seven dollars and eighty cents; but that was yesterday, the thirty-first of January. To-day, the first of February, the bank would deduct two dollars, the monthly fine which Eddie had to pay for troubling it with the care of so small an account. On forty-five dollars and eighty cents Eddie could neither leave town nor put up a front in town; yet something had to be done to keep Julian from discovering the truth.

Something, but what? After an hour of fruitless pondering Eddie came back to the old easy remedy for all his troubles—all, that is, but one—to seek advice and help from Marge. Marge was clever; Marge always had ideas. And certainly ideas were needed now.

For his mother had said that Julian had another errand, a secret errand that everybody knew about; Julian would be happy to hear Eddie's congratulations first of all. Julian was going to be married, then—probably to some New York girl he had met last summer, at Glacier Park or Lake Louise. That meant that Julian's visit to New York would be embellished by social events, at which Eddie must appear. He might even have to entertain the happy pair.

Marge would know all about this, too, for Marge had spent Christmas at home in Royalmont. So obviously Eddie must see Marge and get her ideas about the meeting of this perilous situation. Marge had an amazing talent for putting up a front.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANNUAL SLAUGHTER.

EDDIE'S eyes rested on Marge's photograph as he put on his hat and muffler and overcoat, smart garments dating from the recent period of prosperity. Indeed, in that small room you could hardly have got away from Marge's photograph, even if you had been foolish enough to want to get away from it.

Her black eyes looked out at him with an alert, amused little smile; her bobbed hair curled saucily about her oval face; the black eyebrows arched in a saucy, sophisticated challenge. Sometimes she really looked as saucy as that, especially when she was refusing to marry Eddie. But at times she looked otherwise; at times she even looked tired.

You never thought of Marge as being tired; she was always alert, excited and exciting; whether she was working or playing she was always one hundred per cent there. But Eddie knew that Marge, who worked hard and spent all her money in keeping up a front, must sometimes want to go far away from everybody and rest.

No time for rest to-day! Four o'clock had just struck on the big bell in the Metropolitan Tower. In an hour Marge would be leaving the office; he'd call her up, take her to tea, get some ideas as to the strategy which might impress Julian. And to call her up he must go down to the corner drug store; there was no telephone in the furnished-room house.

It was raining, a cold pouring rain that bounced back from the sidewalk and the hummocks of dark-gray ice that lay on the curb, souvenirs of last month's snows. Eddie had been gloomy enough as he shivered by the riser pipe upstairs, but this pelting torrent made everything worse. Before he had reached the drug store he had concluded that he was quite as hopeless a person as Julian thought him. He would never sell his play, never get another good job; he would starve in the gutter unless he beat destiny to it by jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge.

But the scented warmth of the drug

store banished these chill forebodings. The last trace of gloom blew away as he dropped his nickel in the telephone and prepared to hear her voice.

"Horatio 6400, please . . . Hello! *Hathaway's Magazine?* I want to speak to Miss Lanneaux."

"Miss Lanneaux?" said the switchboard girl uncertainly. "I—I don't know——"

"Oh, put me on Extension 74," said Eddie impatiently.

It wasn't Marge's voice that answered—a woman's voice, but cold and unknown.

"Miss Lanneaux? Why, she isn't here any more."

"What!" Eddie shouted. "Since when? What happened?"

"She 'got the blue ticket—about a week ago."

A week ago! He hadn't called her up for more than two weeks, but she might have told him; she ought to have told him, first of all, when she lost her job.

THEN Eddie remembered that precisely the reason he hadn't called up for more than two weeks was that he had lost his job. Why tell your bad news to the most important girl? Let her alone till you have good news, till you can call her up and tell her that Belasco or Brady or Golden has just given you a thousand-dollar advance on your play—and where would she like to go to dinner before the opera?

So he had reasoned and so, beyond doubt, Marge had reasoned. Whatever happened you kept up a front, particularly before somebody you might have married; especially and above all, if that somebody came from back home.

The lady at the other end of the wire hadn't hung up yet.

"Where did she go?" Eddie asked.

"I don't know, I'm afraid. I suppose she's made a new connection——"

Eddie knew that in the arts, and the business that connived with the arts to thrust fiction or drama on the public, getting a job was always disguised under the euphemism or "making a connection."

"Would you put me on Mr. Cavendish's wire, please?"

"Mr. Cavendish has gone, too."

"Mr. Otway, then."

"Mr. Otway has gone," the icy female persisted.

"Then give me the art department, please. That is—I suppose Mr. Trevennion is still there."

At last the implacable impersonal voice became human.

"God knows!" it said. "We are here to-day and gone to-morrow. But I'll give you the art department."

She did. Mr. Trevennion was still there.

"Say, Trevennion, this is Eddie Reeve. You don't know where Marge Lanneaux is working now, do you?"

"I do not. For all I know she may have turned into another 'Bobbed-Haired Girl Bandit.' That's a better business than being a magazine editor. I know where I'm working now, but I don't know where I'll be working to-morrow if our owner stays on the war-path."

"What's happened?"

"Oh, Herod has staged his annual slaughter of the innocents. I'm the only babe left alive in Bethlehem and I expect to feel the ax on my neck most any morning. The mail room can give you Marge's address, if you want it——"

"Oh, I know where she lives," Eddie assured him.

But he didn't. He discovered that when he called up the woman's hotel, half club and half barracks, where she had lived till lately.

"Miss Lanneaux has checked out, sir."

"Well, where did she go? She's got to live somewhere."

The room clerk didn't seem so sure of this; but Eddie got himself connected with a woman in authority and, by employing all his suave persuasiveness, he learned finally that Marge's mail was being sent to an address on West Forty-ninth Street.

Eddie knew that neighborhood as well as he knew his back yard in Royalmont. Theaters, table-d'hôte dining rooms, rooming houses where actors out of work and gamblers out of luck waited for the turn of the tide. Marge, his fastidious Marge, who prided herself on keeping up a front, had come down to this.

Careless of the pouring rain, he went out into Broadway and started briskly uptown. Half an hour ago he had turned to Marge because he needed her. Now he was going to her because she needed him.

CHAPTER III.

NOT SO EASY.

BETWEEN the tiny furnished room that Marge Lanneaux occupied off Times Square and the tiny furnished room that Eddie Reeve occupied off Madison Square, there was only this difference—Marge's room had a radiator. Never did a utensil so well deserve its name. It radiated eternally, whether it was turned on or turned off, radiated a dry burning heat that made the low-ceiled room almost uninhabitable. That was why Marge, in the light of the unshaded electric bulb, was pounding her typewriter in a condition that can be described only by that ritual newspaper phrase, scantily clad.

She was tired and her head ached. Perhaps the heat made it ache, perhaps the fact that she had eaten little this last week; or perhaps it was the story she was writing.

If she had had to read such a story, when she was assistant fiction editor of *Hathaway's Magazine,* it would have given her a headache; but stories like that were not sent to *Hathaway's,* or if they were they never got up to Marge.

Miss Lanneaux, who had rejected stories by some of the most expensive authors in the world, was now writing a story aimed at a magazine called *Heart Confessions.* Though the story was still untitled, Marge rather thought she would call it "Oh, God! If I Had Known!" Her first story, sent to the same magazine the previous week, had been called, "Should a Stenographer Tell?"

Marge had been fired without warning. The owner of *Hathaway's,* in his annual massacre of editors, had never before gone so low as an assistant fiction editor at sixty dollars a week. Marge had lived through several Reigns of Terror and thought she was safe this time, till the crisp cold morning when she came into her little office, started to take off her hat, saw a blue envelope on the desk, opened it and never took her hat off at all.

SHE had tried for other jobs, of course; but no other jobs that she wanted were open at the moment and she wasn't sure that she wanted another job, anyway. Since Christmas she had been contemplating a change of occupation. While she made up her mind, or waited for a good job to open up, she meant to support herself by writing fiction, the kind of fiction that looked easiest. And now that she was trying it, she was finding out that it wasn't so easy, after all. Pretty shameful, she told herself; a long drop down, for Marge Lanneaux.

Her shameful secret was well kept. Nobody knew where she was or what she was doing; her manuscript bore the pseudonym of Vivien Vaile and she had told the landlady she might get mail under her pen name. But if nobody else knew, Marge knew. She groaned as she read over the beginning of her story:

I wonder if all good women have within them the seeds of degradation such as mine. For I, too, was a good woman once, eager and high spirited, demanding of Life what Life alone can give—but good. Had any one told me, then, that I could lead that double life that I have led since I met Bosworth Collantine, I should have spurned the suggestion. I wonder if my childhood playmates, in that peaceful Western city that seems so far away, if my gay, courageous sorority sisters in college, would only pity me or despise me if they knew all.

Or would they, those sister women, understand?

Here it is set down in my diary—the story of my life. For *my* life is ended, though the gay abandoned creature of the Great White Way who still inhabits my shell goes on——

"Blah!" said Marge furiously. "I'd rather be a bobbed-haired bandit. More money in it and less disgrace——"

"Miss Lanneaux!" the maid's voice came up the stair well. "Gemman to see you."

"Now, who the devil!" Marge groaned. "I thought nobody could find me." Nevertheless, she went out to the hallway and leaned over the banister.

An eager voice came up from four floors below.

"It's only me, Marge."

"Only you!" There was nobody in New York whom Marge was more anxious not to see, and not to be seen by, in her present interlude of squalor, than Eddie Reeve. But there was no escape now.

"Wait a minute!" she called, and disappeared into her room.

"I'll wait," said Eddie.

"You better wait," a cold voice told him.

He looked up, past the red-headed mulatto maid who had admitted him, into the cold wrought-iron countenance of the landlady, Mrs. Helena McCune. Mrs. McCune was habitually displeased with everybody, but Eddie couldn't imagine why she should be especially displeased with him. To Eddie, Marge had been a mere blur against the skylight four floors above; he didn't know that the hawk eyes of Mrs. McCune had discerned that Marge was scantily clad.

"You wait till she gets dressed proper and comes down to the parlor." said Mrs. McCune. "Ladies don't receive in their rooms, in my house."

"But I never dreamed of going up to her room!" Eddie expostulated, and might have gained himself some standing as a well-behaved young man if he hadn't ruined the effect by adding: "Four flights of stairs? Let somebody else climb Mount Everest."

"Hah!" said Mrs. McCune. "Don't you let me see you outside the parlor! This is a respectable house."

Her tone suggested that it was the only one in New York. Eddie sighed. Whatever may have been the Age of Innocence, the Place of Innocence, in New York, is the one-room apartment, living room by day and bedroom by night, where any bachelor girl may receive her friends without impropriety and without shame. That was the sort of place Marge had lived in, when she didn't live in a hotel. If she had come down to a rooming house that had to advertise its respectability with a loud speaker, she had come down pretty far.

But he marched into the parlor and sat down on the hard little sofa and waited, not even daring to smoke a cigarette. Behind him he heard Mrs. McCune telling the maid:

"You go up and tell the Lanneaux woman to come down to the parlor. I've always thought she'd bear watchin' and I bet her friends will bear watchin', too."

"Thinks I'll steal the silver, I suppose," Eddie reflected resentfully.

THERE was nothing worth stealing in this shabby room; nothing portable, for that matter, but cheap and ancient bric-a-brac on the mantelpiece and the enlarged crayon portrait of Mrs. McCune that stood on a large

gilt easel before the tiled front of the false fireplace. And as Eddie looked at that portrait, he began to feel more charitably toward Mrs. McCune.

She was too suspicious, but she must have learned suspicion from hard experience; you could guess that much from the wrought-iron face, the steely eye behind the steel-rimmed spectacles. The crayon artist who was responsible for this awful portrait, in its still more awful gilt frame, had left that eye glaring with its own natural truculence, even though the rest of the portrait flattered Mrs. McCune as enlarged crayon portraits must.

She looked twenty years younger in the picture; her face had as near an approach to beauty as the artist could give it while still keeping it recognizable; but the steely eye and the iron jaw were still there. The portrait, evidently, was the chief artistic treasure of the house; it embodied, for Mrs. McCune, the youth that she had lost and the beauty she had never had; but it was hard.

It was a portrait, but it was also a piece of propaganda, a reminder that you couldn't take chances with Mrs. McCune. Eddie sighed. Mrs. McCune, too, had to keep up a front. He couldn't help feeling some sympathy for a fellow struggler engaged in that hazardous occupation, in the hazardous city of New York.

CHAPTER IV.

A SQUARE SHOOTER?

THEN Marge came in, her black eyes snapping, her black bobbed hair curling saucily, her smart orange frock lightening up the dark room. She looked anything but down and out.

"Marge!" he began tensely.

"Looking at the old master?" she asked, rather unsuccessfully trying to ignore his tenseness. "Isn't it a scream? We all kid Mrs. McCune about it and I'm not sure she knows she's being kidded, at that. They say she takes this picture to bed with her every night."

"Marge! Talk to me! What happened?"

"I was fired," she said lightly, choosing to sit down on the sofa, now that he had got up from it to stride nervously about.

"I knew that. But why have you come to this awful dump? Even if you wanted to save money, you haven't come down to——"

"I never want to save money," said Marge. "I never did save money. That's why I'm here. I bought some good clothes to wear home at Christmas and I paid the last installment on my fur coat the day I got the blue ticket. The bad news found me with forty dollars in the bank. I couldn't go on paying seventy-five a month for a room at Pankhurst House."

"Yes, but why did you hide out in a hole like this?"

"Because I didn't want to see anybody. I didn't think anybody would find me here. I'm quite angry with you, Eddie—really."

"Oh, don't be silly. If I can help at——"

"You hadn't come to see me, or even telephoned to me, for weeks. But when I get down to this, you have to come plunging in on me——"

"Please, Marge! I only heard of this just now. I know that's my fault, but—— What are you doing—for a living, I mean?"

"Writing fiction." She bit her lip; she hadn't meant to confess that.

"Selling it?"

"I only started trying it a week ago."

"What kind are you writing? What magazines are you aiming at?"

"Eddie, do you realize that all this is none of your business? What is it to my friends how I make a living, so long as I keep up the front?"

"Well, you know I worry about you —— If I could only help——"

"You can, as it happens. You could get me a cut rate at the Minaret, couldn't you—just for a week?"

"At the Minaret? No! But of course—you hadn't heard. I've been fired, too."

"Fired from the Minaret? Why?"

"The bobbed-haired girl bandit. And because Mr. Justin Amidon, who lately bought the Minaret, is a damn fool, even if he is worth fifty million."

"That's so—the bandit pulled a hold-up in the Minaret, didn't she?"

"She certainly did—her old stuff, that she's worked in every big hotel in town. This girl, smooth and good looking, registers at a hotel as Mrs. Ump or Blah or Hoozis or Dinglefunny and looks around till she sees who's all loaded up with jewelry. The hotels are the place for that, of course—real New Yorkers leave their stuff in safe-deposit vaults and wear imitations.

"Then, when somebody who carries a heavy cargo of diamonds and so on is dressing for a party some evening, there comes a knock at the door. They open it on a pretty girl in a dinner gown and a fur coat; there's a man in evening dress behind her. Nobody shuts a door on a woman like that.

"She explains it's all a mistake—the wrong room and then the man walks in with a mask on, out comes the gat and up goes the hands; the girl slips on a mask, too, so they won't recognize her as she goes the rounds and takes all the portable property. Then she ties everybody up with curtain cords and gags them with towels and a smart young couple in evening dress walk out to the elevator and nobody knows they've got a gun and a couple of masks and a hundred thousand dollars' worth of jewels in their pockets."

"Why don't the police catch her?"

"Well, with the mask, all anybody knows is that she wears black bobbed hair and a gray-squirrel coat. The man's just a white-faced young Rudolph who wears a dinner coat well. That description would fit ten thousand couples in this town."

"Why, yes!" said Marge. "I've got black bobbed hair and a gray-squirrel coat myself. But how did you come to lose your job?"

"Oh! Why she stuck up six visitors from Syracuse, who were having a drink in somebody's room in our hotel, and relieved them of about two hundred thousand dollars' worth. Well, my late owner, Mr. Justin Amidon, is a big man in politics, you know, and the idiot thought he could keep it out of the papers, when some of the victims had already called up the night desks and made their squawk.

HE told me to deny there'd been a robbery as he called up the newspaper owners. And I said he couldn't kill the story and the only thing to do was to glorify the Minaret by pointing out that our guests had more jewels to lose than any other hotel's guests. He couldn't see that and we had words and the next thing I knew I was sliding down the front steps and bouncing back from a fire plug."

"What a shame!"

"Oh, I don't know. It was a good job, but I didn't care for it much. This play I'm writing—I hadn't meant to tell you about it till it was sold, but now——"

"Save the good news," said Marge. "So you can't get me a rate?"

"Look here, why do you want to live at the Minaret, even on a rate? If you're broke, you'll have to live in some dump. Maybe not so bad as this one, but you'd better hang on to that last forty dollars."

"Can't do it," said Marge. "Some friends of mine are coming to town and I've got to put up a front."

"Oh!" That explained everything

and excused anything, to Eddie. "Say, that's tough, Marge. I—I'm in the same boat, only worse. Julian's coming to town."

"So I heard," said Marge alertly.

"I—I live in a dump just about like this," Eddie confessed. "and I'm only about five dollars farther away from bankruptcy than you are. But I've got to throw some sort of party for Julian. Especially since he's going to be married."

"What?" she gasped. "Where did you hear that?"

"In a letter from mother. She said everybody knew about it, back home."

"Oh, they do, do they?" said Marge softly, with fire in her eye.

"Yes, she said she supposed I'd heard about it. But I hadn't. I thought maybe you knew something about it, having been back home at Christmas last——"

"I seem to know less about it than anybody else," said Marge dryly. "I—I thought Julian was going to be married, till just now. But now—I'm——"

"Why—— What——"

"You see," said Marge, "I was going to marry him."

He faced her with incredulity that slowly yielded to certainty and to rising wrath.

"You! You! Julian? Oh, my God, Marge, no! No. You just can't. It's simply out of the question. I know you don't want to marry me, but don't rub it in. Not Julian!"

Marge, as usual, stiffened under opposition.

"Why not Julian?" she inquired.

"Why, he's old——"

"Thirty-three. You're twenty-eight. I'm twenty-six."

"Julian's ninety-seven inside. You know that. He's bald and fat——"

"A little stout, perhaps," said Marge, with dignity. "But he's clever and successful and—oh, constructive! And in his way he's good."

"In his way," said Eddie. "And I know his way. He's so good there's no living with him nor near him. He's so good he makes everybody else look rotten. If they don't look rotten, he paints them up a little bit. I know."

"Perhaps you mean he knows you!" she suggested acidly.

"Marge, you know me better than anybody else. Even if you won't marry me, you're my best friend. You always have been, ever since we were kids. You know the way he's always treated me—— Oh, what's the use? He's mean and underhanded——"

"Eddie! This sort of thing isn't done."

"I know it isn't done. But you won't marry me and if I didn't want to marry you, it would be only square shooting to tell you what he's really like——"

"But since you do want to marry me," she interrupted. "it isn't square shooting and it isn't convincing. You're not exactly unbiased, Eddie."

"Of course I'm not! I know you and I know him—the best there is and the worst there is. He's bald and he's fat and he's pompous; he's always right and he knows it; before the honeymoon's over he'll be telling you the things his wife can't do—just the things you'll want to do, at that. He'll bulldoze you and smother you with his insufferable superiority——"

"Perhaps," she admitted miserably. "Oh, Eddie, if you and Julian could only be rolled into one person! Each of you has just what the other lacks in——"

"Thank God I lack what he's got!" said Eddie complacently.

"Really? Thank God you're broke, down and out? Thank God you can't make money, make people like you and think you're a great man? Thank God you can't do things, things that endure for——"

"Do things? He inherited the carpet factory."

"But he's trebled the dividend. Yes, he told me that himself, but other people confirmed it."

"You can't scare me that way," said Eddie. "You wouldn't marry for money."

"Not for money—no. But I'd marry to make something of my life, something constructive and concrete, to help a man who can do things—I want to leave something behind me that people can look at and say: 'Marge did that.' Not just to sit at a desk and buy what other people make; not to write trashy fiction that I'd be ashamed to read—— And I want children."

"Julian's children?"

Her eyes held his, unwavering.

"My children. You couldn't support a family. Even when you made money, you spent it all keeping up a front. Suppose I said I'd marry you? I'd move into your hall bedroom—or you'd move into mine; we'd pound out junk on our typewriters, if the table was big enough to hold both of them, till the time came to take Julian to dinner at the Automat, show him how far we'd risen in all these years, how we'd licked New York."

THIS was so true that it never occurred to him to query why her thoughts were then running in this direction.

"But if you're going to marry Julian——"

"I haven't said I would. I told him I'd think it over and I let him kiss me good-by and I suppose he took it for granted. But——"

"Then you won't? Oh, Marge!"

"I haven't said I won't."

"Want to look him over, before you make up your mind?"

"Just about that," she admitted.

"And he'll be looking you over, too, in this awful hole——"

"He won't see me here," Marge vowed. "I've got a trunkful of clothes; I could get into a good hotel on that alone——"

"And leave the trunk to pay your bill."

"If I have to. If Julian's so sure of me that he tells all Royalmont about it, I've got to show him that I can do without him. If I ever want to do anything with him, I'll have to bluff him before we start. He's got to see me living in splendor even if it takes my last nickel—only I haven't got any last nickel. I don't know why I'm telling you this, except——"

"Yes?" said Eddie.

"Except that you've always been my best friend. We've always brought our troubles to each other——"

"And we always will," said Eddie, sitting down beside her on the sofa.

She let his arm slip around her; she let him pull her head down on his shoulder; she let him kiss her.

AND then the unlatched door was pushed open as a hard voice announced:

"Mail for you, Miss Lanneaux."

Marge jumped up, crimson. Eddie had often kissed her; often, indeed, he had been seen kissing her, at parties, among their friends. But before the steely eyes of Mrs. McCune, everything seemed wicked. Marge avoided those eyes as she took the letter. Eddie nervously lit a cigarette as Mrs. McCune walked out, with a watchful backward glance, leaving the door ajar. Marge slit open the envelope and read to herself:

DEAR MISS VAILE: HEART CONFESSIONS is greatly intrigued by "Should a Stenographer Tell?" A check is inclosed, for we believe in paying promptly. I hope you will be able to do us some more stories of the same type; we like your light touch immensely. Faithfully yours,

HOBART HAXWORTH, *Editor.*

"My light touch!" Marge whispered. "Gosh! I wonder if all good women

have within them the seeds of degradation such as mine!"

"Good news?" Eddie asked, and she woke to eager activity.

"Good news? I should say it is. Seventy-five dollars, my boy. That ought to cover my hotel bills while Julian's here, if I eat at a cafeteria. Just in time, too. I wouldn't dare pawn my fur coat, if I have to go out and around with Julian, and I haven't got the nerve to be a bobbed-haired bandit."

"And yet you've got the nerve to think of marrying him? Marge, that would be worse than a life term in the pen. Oh, my dear, you simply can't do it! Look here. You love me——"

"I do not!"

"Well, you acted as if——"

"Oh. get out!" she cried furiously. "I was crazy."

"Marge, I'll get a job—any kind of job——"

"How about the play?"

"Oh, I could do that of evenings."

"You wouldn't. I know you. Of evenings you'd want to be out with the gang and so would I. No, Eddie, it won't work."

"But this other thing won't work, I tell you! Oh, I know it's not my business to tell you; but even if you never speak to me again, it's worth it if I can keep you from marrying Julian. I care enough for you——"

"Not to want anybody else to have me? I thought so."

"Not to want him to have you. You'd hate him——"

"If you keep on talking," said Marge, "I'll be in love with him. I won't say I'll marry him till I've looked him over, but I'll never marry you. Never, never, never, never!"

Neither of them realized that her voice was approaching a shriek till the door swung open.

"If you've got to fight," said Mrs. McCune, "go out and fight in Times Square. This is a respectable house."

Eddie bowed.

"I am just about to save its reputation," he announced, "by taking the air."

"Take it and keep it," said Marge, with a fierceness the more vindictive because at least forty-nine per cent of her wanted to tumble into his arms. "I never want to see you again, unless——"

"Unless?" he repeated.

"Unless Julian asks you to tea to meet his fiancée."

"Go to the devil!" he advised her. "You'll find him better company than Julian. I'll send back your letters."

"Send them to the Minaret," said Marge.

CHAPTER V.

AWAY FROM THERE.

THAT crisp blue check for seventy-five dollars crinkled encouragingly in Marge's hand as she skipped up four flights of stairs. Marge needed encouragement just now, but she resolutely put Eddie out of her mind. Eddie was the past; Julian was, or might be, the future, her future. This check had saved her, whether she decided to marry Julian or not.

It would enable her to put up a front, to meet him as an equal, as a successful woman of letters, a personage who had her place in the life of New York. In the glittering opulence of the Minaret, Julian would see her as some one who must be worked for and treated with respect. He couldn't play the prince lifting Cinderella out of the ashes, as he might if he found her in Mrs. McCune's rooming house.

Marge wasn't sure that he would even want to lift her out of the ashes, if he found her at Mrs. McCune's; Julian would demand a wife who kept up a front, even if she had nothing to keep it up on. But if he found her at the Minaret, he was sure to find her desirable and, though she was by no

means sure she would marry him, one always liked to be found desirable.

Now that she was going to leave it forever, Marge found herself feeling more kindly toward the establishment of Mrs. McCune. There was something pathetic about the woman's solicitude for her portrait. She loved it like a child; it was literally true that she took it to bed with her; either she or the maid had an eye on it all day long. And the house, though dingy, had its conveniences.

There was, for example, a gas iron which Marge rented for half a dollar a week and which enabled her to give her laundry a personal attention that would be impossible in the Minaret. Better get the laundry in shape, before she moved and had to send it out to be done at hotel prices. So Marge thriftily washed out several pieces of underwear in the bathroom down the corridor and set them out to dry on the fiery radiator while she packed.

And as she packed, her eye fell on this new story just finished. Here was another potential seventy-five dollars and if she didn't marry Julian, she would need it. But Marge was feeling reckless this evening and wouldn't admit, even to herself, just why. The money she had now would carry her over the critical week of Julian's visit. After that—the end of the world. Either she would be engaged to Julian, with the certainty that the family would buy the trousseau and send her all the money she might need in the interval between engagement and marriage, or else——

Or else she could disappear into another furnished-room house and dodge her friends while she hunted another job. At any rate, she was sick of writing for *Heart Confessions*. Still, seventy-five dollars was seventy-five dollars. She slipped the story back in the table drawer, for the moment, and went on packing.

For a broke lady she had excellent clothes—including three new and dashing evening gowns and the squirrel coat. No jewels—and she rather imagined that Julian would be impressed by jewels. But she could borrow jewelry from girls of her acquaintance, self-supporting girls like herself who would gladly lend them for a critical week in which the front must be kept up. Jewels that were all insured—a bracelet from Gladys, a dinner ring or two from Kathleen—the chastely opulent jewels that a prosperous bachelor girl might reasonably own. And perhaps she might borrow that diamond pendant—it was insured, too—from Edith Kleinhans whom Marge had introduced to the wealthy gentleman she married. Edith was going off to Atlantic City, but Marge might catch her by phone before she left.

It was past dinner time, but Marge was too excited to be hungry. She finished packing, took her underwear from the radiator, ironed it out and had just finished the last piece when footsteps came slowly up the stairs and there was a tap at the door. She opened it on a messenger boy.

"Miss Lanneaux?" At her nod, he held out a package. "The guy said to go to the Minaret and if you ain't there you'll be here."

"And here I am," said Marge, handing him half a dollar and slamming the door.

So Eddie hadn't really believed she would move to the Minaret, hadn't credited her with courage enough to spend this unforeseen windfall in keeping up a front. And now, if he asked the messenger boy, he would learn that she was still at Mrs. McCune's; he wouldn't know that she was just leaving. But he would see! He'd have to see. She'd show him.

Then she opened the package and gradually became absorbed in its contents.

Letters—a meager lot, but they covered half a dozen years. The letters she had written Eddie from home, in that first year after he had come to New York, while she was still persuading her parents to let her come. Letters she had written him on vacations out of town; letters she had written in town, when she had failed to get him by telephone; and one or two notes she had written late at night, after he had left her, when she was feeling more sentimental about him than she had ever managed to feel while Eddie was with her in his own good-humored irresponsible person. And, underneath all, her photograph.

MARGE read the letters, read them all, and the last one fell from her languid hand as she stared moodily into the darkness of the air shaft outside her window. Yes, she had come to the very brink of marrying Eddie, half a dozen times. Maybe he would have been different if she had married him. Responsibility would have steadied him. He would have worked; they would have worked, together.

She jumped up fiercely. This was nonsense; after all, she knew Eddie. Julian knew him, too. Julian was by no means as bad as Eddie thought him. He could be a good friend, a firm bulwark. She snatched up the big photograph, tore it halfway across and flung it into the wastebasket. Then she threw the letters into her shiny black bag, put on her gray-squirrel coat, pressed her close-fitting green hat down over her bobbed black hair and walked out. One last glance around the room, from the threshold—yes. she seemed to have everything.

Mrs. McCune was in her sitting room on the ground floor back when Marge walked in and held out a ten-dollar bill.

"Checking out," she said crisply. "The taxi driver will get my trunk."

"About time you were checking out, after that stuff you pulled this afternoon. That sort of thing don't go in my house."

"Is that so?" said Marge, feeling that this was not the wittiest of answers, but unable to think of a better one. "A house that would stand for that crayon portrait——"

She broke off prudently, as a flame began to glow behind Mrs. McCune's iron face.

"Where shall I send your mail?" the landlady asked.

"You won't get any. I'll have my old address send it to my new address. Nobody will ever know that I've been in this dump at all."

The door slammed behind her.

"Oh, they won't, won't they?" said Mrs. McCune.

CHAPTER VI.

STEPPING OUT.

SCANTILY and without appetite, Eddie Reeve dined at the Automat and, while dining, he had an idea. Not much of an idea, but any idea was welcome in the present crisis.

His college fraternity had a club in New York and the club maintained a house, a respectable house in a respectable neighborhood, the sort of house which would impress even Julian. It was true that Eddie was posted for nonpayment of dues; to square himself he would have to spend thirty dollars, more than two-thirds of his capital. But with his dues paid he could move into the clubhouse and wouldn't have to worry about his bills for a month. That didn't solve all the problems involved in Julian's visit, but it solved the first and most immediate one, the getting away from that impossible rooming house off Madison Square.

The rain had stopped, but a fierce cold wind chilled Eddie as he walked down Broadway; to-night, in the Park,

raindrops would be freezing on bare branches and in Eddie's furnished room the riser pipe would be battling in vain against the cold drafts that seeped in under the door and around the ill-fitting window. A good night to move—and by nine o'clock he had moved.

By nine o'clock he was established in his respectable and comfortable club, with his last five dollars in his pocket and an incurable restlessness in his soul. If he sat down to smoke a cigarette in one of these armchairs, he would begin to think about Marge; but if he walked, walked in this icy wind, he might be able to get his mind on other topics——

So he walked, prowling aimlessly but ever nearer Times Square, to come out at last in the bright-lit sweep of Broadway. It was taking all his will power to keep away from Mrs. McCune's rooming house where he was convinced Marge was still living in squalor.

He paused on a corner, where a dim side street, dubiously active, led away from the light-flooded emptiness of Times Square. Across the street was a theater, devoted for the moment to a motion-picture feature. A huge electric sign spelled it out for him—"Climaxo Pictures Presents Mildred Morayne in 'Aphrodite.'" Beneath the sign, above the awning that screened the door, was a huge painting of Mildred Morayne herself, a simpering daub that resembled the living Mildred—a glittering person whom Eddie knew tolerably well—as little as the crayon portrait in Mrs. McCune's parlor resembled Mrs. McCune. Yet, like that portrait, it was loved by somebody; from across the street a searchlight played its white beam on the picture.

Wah! Eddie had thought of going into the theater, to still his nerves by absorption in the photo play; but somehow the searchlight and the painting discouraged him. He turned down the side street, wandering aimlessly, and presently saw lights in certain windows which he identified as belonging to the apartment of Howard Hamar.

Eddie had no high opinion of Howard Hamar, a morning-newspaper man whose front was as unshakable, whose self-assurance as complete, as Julian's.

But if Hamar was at home at this hour of the evening, it must be his night off, and the parties that Hamar threw on his night off were usually sufficient to distract jangled nerves, whatever else could be said against them.

So Eddie climbed the stairs and found a party—half a dozen men and three or four women, drinking high balls and dancing languidly to the music of a squawky radio. Installed on a couch after he had expressed an unwillingness to dance, he looked them over with distaste. He had attended scores of parties like this and had once found them amusing, but not now. He had taken Marge to a few of them and they had bored her. He began to wonder, now, if his tolerance for just such parties had not helped to persuade Marge that he wasn't to be taken seriously.

MARGE certainly was no Puritan. She drank some and permitted, when she felt like it, a mild amount of petting and she didn't care what her friends did. But she had certain standards of taste and manners. She wouldn't be amused by these lush sprawling persons who did nothing of value and said nothing clever. At last, Marge's standards were beginning to impress themselves on Eddie—now that it was too late.

"What's the matter?" asked the girl beside him. "You look as if you'd just bought a ticket back to Royalmont."

"Royalmont!" He sat up with a sudden chill. "What do you know about Royalmont?"

"I know a lot. About you, too."

He looked at her, frowning, unable to recall that he had ever seen her before. Not that she was any one to frown at. If her golden hair was a little too golden, a little too much like a gilded radiator, her green gown exposed shapely white shoulders and her full mouth and sleepy brown eyes were smiling.

"I missed your name," he confessed.

"Marie Selver. But you never knew me, anyway. I used to see you, though, when you were home from college. I was married, in those days—to the guy that owned the Racket Store."

"Oh! Pardee, you mean?"

"That was the guy. Paul Pardee—and a mean one, too. I ditched him, in course of time. I was in the chorus of a show that played a week at the Apollo, in Royalmont, and this bird saw me from out in front and rushed over to the hotel and grabbed me. 'Stage Star Weds Merchant Prince'—that was how the Royalmont *Tribune* played it up and that was the way it looked then! But it didn't look so bright after three years in Royalmont, so I ditched him and came back to town."

"Lots of good people have left Royalmont," said Eddie. "Where are you working now?"

"I'm not working," said Miss Selver, with some hauteur. "But if you write to the gang back home. just tell them that you saw me and that I wear a real mink coat."

"Consider yourself given three cheers," said Eddie. "'Home Town Girl Knocks Gotham Cold——' But I never write home, except to the family, and not to all of the family. Maybe you've heard of my cousin, Julian Reeve?"

"Oh, ho!" she laughed softly. "I should say I have. What I could tell you about Jule——"

"Jule?" Eddie gasped. "Did you dare to call him Jule?"

"Did I? There was a time when I called him 'Baldy'—and he stood for it."

Eddie shook with silent laughter. The girl settled herself back on the cushions and looked at him beneath lowered eyelids.

"I'd been wondering if I'd ever run into you," she said. "I've seen half a dozen people from Royalmont, here and there around town, but I always cross the street. I've got no loving memories of the sticks. But you—I remember everybody said you weren't much good; not like Cousin Jule, who owned the carpet factory. I always felt kind of sorry for you. And then when you came on to New York and went over big, I said to myself, 'Well, that shows Royalmont.'"

"Went over big?" Eddie repeated nervously. "Yes, yes, of course. I never see anybody from home, myself—except Marge Lanneaux——"

"Marge Lanneaux? Oh, yes, I remember her. Edith Miller in the telephone exchange back there still writes to me and she said this Lanneaux woman was going to marry Baldy. God help her, say we, eh?"

"We certainly do," said Eddie. "How about dancing a bit?"

They danced, Marie's eyes glancing over Eddie's shoulder from time to time with a sort of sullen challenge. By deft maneuvering he presently identified the man she was glancing at, a pale hungry-looking youth who was devoting himself to a fat girl in pink with rather more industry than she seemed to deserve. The dance stopped; Marie had a high ball; the pale youth was still devoted to pink fatness; they danced again.

By this time Eddie was beginning to find a feeble sort of enjoyment. Marie was agreeable and she danced well; and if she had seized on him to compensate a lovers' quarrel, if she meant to use him as the fourth corner that would turn the wearisome triangle into a

more sightly square, what of it? Marge had said that even if she didn't marry Julian, she would never marry him—never, never, never, never! There were other women in the world.

EDDIE was trying to persuade himself that he did believe this, as he and Marie settled down on the couch after their second dance and Howard Hamar came over to make sure his guests were having a good time.

"What's doing, Eddie? Hear you left the Minaret."

"Yes, I'm writing a play."

"Keep it clean," said Hamar. "The clean stuff is what makes the money, especially now that the police are pulling the raw shows. Virtue pays."

"Unless you can be a bobbed-haired bandit," said Marie. "I might get my hair cut any day now, just to get in on the easy money."

"Easy money it is," Hamar agreed. "I've been covering that story ever since it broke and I must say I'm for the bobbed-haired bandit. Much obliged for the stuff you gave me that night she worked in the Minaret, Eddie. You saved our story. Old Amidon was quite snooty about it."

"Yes, so I discovered," said Eddie. "I'd like to catch Amidon alone on the stringpiece of a dock some dark night, damn him. What's the inside on this bobbed-haired bandit story, Hamar? Who is she?"

"I'd like to know, too," said Marie. "Not that I ever wear jewelry much, but my mink coat has been admired."

"Oh, I believe she's a corporation," said Hamar. "You know what saps the police are—and the night city editors too. All they need is a catch phrase, a wise crack, something that will fit into a headline—and they ask no more. So what do we know about this girl? That she wears bobbed hair. That makes a good short phrase, a wise crack, and that's all anybody asks. She's got bobbed hair—well, black bobbed hair—somebody carried the identification that far. And she wears a squirrel coat. That's all we know."

"I've got a squirrel coat at home myself!" said Marie. "I never wear it, since I got the mink, but——"

"Well, you'd better not wear it," said Hamar. "First thing you know the *Universe* will start one of its crusades against the incompetence of our police and then every girl with black bobbed hair and a gray-squirrel coat will be pulled over to the nearest police station to give her pedigree. Very thick, our local gendarmes."

"You don't mean it?" said Eddie, busy with memories of Marge's gray-squirrel coat and black bobbed hair.

"It's not impossible. Nothing's impossible to our police. If you want my theory, there are probably fifty bobbed-haired bandits. Apparently anybody with black bobbed hair and a gray-squirrel coat is eligible and I don't see why they shouldn't get in on it."

"Why don't you identify her, or one of her? You're a great reporter."

"Why should I?" said Hamar. "Get a twenty-five-dollar bonus, maybe, and find that all my police pipe lines of information were shut off on my next story because I'd made some inspector look like a fool?"

"But there's a five-thousand-dollar reward——"

"Hung up by the hotel owners," said Hamar, with a yawn. "They'll see that some hotel detective gets it and that he has to give about ninety per cent of it back. Who gives a damn, anyway? She only robs the rich."

The music began again; Eddie saw that Hamar aspired to dance with Marie and he aspired to beat Hamar to it.

"Let me drag you around a bit?" Eddie suggested.

She assented with a gentle pressure of her hand, but refused with a shaking head.

"Not this one," she whispered. "Wait a minute."

The pale-faced youth had got rid of the fat girl in pink and Marie crossed the floor to settle down on the arm of his chair and converse in earnest whispers. Eddie contemplated the party with disgust. Why was he there, anyway? Marge had said she didn't want to see him again, but——

"Got a telephone, Hamar?"

"Sure. Right there in the bedroom."

Eddie stepped into the booth and called Mrs. McCune's rooming house.

After a little trouble with central, an adenoidal voice came over the wire to Eddie's ear.

"Yes?"

"Is this Mrs. McCune?"

"Mrs. McCune's busy. This is the maid."

"Oh! I want to speak to Miss Lanneaux."

"Lanneaux? Oh! Vaile."

"No, no. Not Vaile—Lanneaux—Miss——"

"All the same," said the maid. "She used both names."

Eddie shook his head in puzzlement. One name had always been enough for the Marge he knew.

"Well, I want to speak to her, anyway."

"She's gone."

So, then she had done it.

"Where did she go?" He couldn't believe, even now, that she would pay Minaret prices out of her last seventy-five dollars.

"I dunno. She didn't leave no address."

"Well, let me talk to Mrs. McCune."

"You can't. She's busy. She don't know where this Miss Vaile went, anyway."

Eddie swore softly, hung up and came back into the living room, intending to tell Hamar good-by. But Marie Selver met him, her arms held out, swaying to the music.

"How about a little drag?" she inquired.

Eddie saw no reason why he shouldn't dance another before he went home.

CHAPTER VII.

BROADWAY STUFF.

IN her sitting room on the ground-floor back, Mrs. McCune was busy—busy with an actor, one Binley, who was just going out on the road and disputing with her over an item in his bill of three dollars and forty cents for telephone calls to Freeport.

"I tell you I only called once," he protested, "and if I talked over five minutes——"

"Tell it to the judge," said Mrs. McCune. "Nellie!"

The red-headed mulatto maid came shuffling in.

"Nellie, Mr. Binley's tryin' to beat his bill. He's leavin' for Boston at ten forty-two with the road company of 'Pussy Willow.' Just get the police station on the wire——"

"Oh, take it, damn you!" Mr. Binley howled. "I only called Freeport once—— Well, maybe twice——"

"You talked every night last week," said Mrs. McCune grimly, "and once for twenty minutes. I know what you talked about, too. Better pay up, young man. I ain't been in this business for twenty years without knowin' how to take my precautions. There—three forty out of five. Thank you! Come again, Mr. Binley, if you ever get another chance on Broadway."

The door banged behind Mr. Binley and Mrs. McCune grinned at Nellie.

"I've made money in this business, Nellie—right fair money, considerin' the hard times and taxes and the way the price of everything goes up. But I've made it by gettin' what was comin' to me, even from fellows like him. You can do it, if you only know how to take your precautions. Mind the

door and the telephone. I'm going upstairs to make sure this Binley didn't leave anything—and the Lanneaux woman, too."

Five minutes after Mr. Binley had left, Mrs. McCune came out of the sitting room, passed the door of the parlor that stood ajar as Marge had left it after her interview with Eddie and went on upstairs. Nellie came out of the sitting room and settled down in her chair under the telephone, in the alcove by the basement stairway, to read the *Heart Confessions* magazine. And neither Nellie nor Mrs. McCune so much as dreamed of the horrible and fantastic revenge that Mr. Binley, inflamed by regret for his three dollars and forty cents and made imaginative by the contents of a flask he had finished before he left the rooming house, had wrought upon Mrs. McCune in that five-minute interval.

EDDIE was dancing his third consecutive fox trot with Marie Selver, feeling the cold blue eyes of the pale youth stabbing him between his shoulder blades.

"Has that bird got a mortgage on you?" he inquired uneasily.

"Him? Say, he owns me and the ground I walk on and he's got a ninety-nine-year lease on the rest of the earth —to hear him! Why? Does he worry you?"

"No, but if he worries you——"

"Oh, I don't get a blood pressure over his little ways. He'll come around. I know him."

"Hey!" yelled a man in the doorway, a movie press agent whom Eddie knew, as did most of the others. "Come and look—it's just around the corner."

Dancing couples let go of each other; drinking couples set down their glasses; other couples abandoned their whispered conversations.

"What is it?" Hamar asked.

"Right around here at the Nell Gwynne Theater, where Climaxo Pictures are putting on the world's greatest superproduction, Mildred Morayne in 'Aphrodite.' "

"Ah!" said Hamar. "Going to pull some cheap press-agent story, I suppose?"

"Honest, I didn't frame this and not a night desk in town will take it. Some stew had a moment of humor—must have got up there while the doorman wasn't looking—— There's nobody on Broadway now, with the theaters not out yet—— Oh, come and look, come and look!"

Hastily they flung on coats and trooped out. Any New York crowd, Eddie reflected, would go anywhere on the off-chance of seeing anything. Marie Selver's hand tucked itself ingratiatingly in his arm as they came out into the biting wind of the cross street. He couldn't disengage it politely, yet it gave him no joy. That arm should be reserved for one hand only, a hand that would never rest there again. Yet he had been playing up to Marie all evening and she was a cheerful little trick.

They trooped down to the corner and then they saw. They saw a doorman, resplendent in his gold-braided coat, puffing up a ladder, and over the glass awning that screened the door his objective stood out boldly in the glare of the searchlight from across the street. The painting of Mildred Morayne, familiar to every passer-by on Broadway for a fortnight past, was concealed, hidden behind an enlarged crayon portrait in a heavy gilt frame on a fragile gilt easel—the portrait of Mrs. Helena McCune under the blazing bright-lit legend, "Aphrodite."

"God knows where he got it!" said the press agent, with professional appreciation, "but ain't it a wow? And not a night desk in town will take the story——"

"Why, that's old Mrs. McCune!" said somebody. "Up here on Forty-

ninth Street. She'd as soon lose her immortal soul as that picture. But who cares? I always thought she was a stool pigeon, anyway. Ah!"

The doorman, climbing precariously, had reached the easel; unsteadily he detached it, carried it down the ladder and then, safe once more on the pavement, he hurled the framed portrait into a can of the street-cleaning department at the curb. Then he jumped on the easel savagely, smashed it into little bits, threw the sticks out into the street and turned his back, with dignity, on the laughing group that had come from Howard Hamar's.

"And that," Eddie reflected gloomily, "is the second speaking likeness that's gone into the ash can to-night." For he knew that Marge would never give another man the picture that he had returned to her. She would cast it out of her life, as she had cast him out.

"Well," said Hamar, "let's get back. The fire's out."

Eddie perceived that Marie had deserted him, to talk to the pale youth; but now she drifted back, her hand sought his arm.

"I'm tired of this party," he told her. "Do I take you home?"

"Not a chance," she sighed, and though she would have had to pretend regret out of mere politeness, it seemed to Eddie that the regret was genuine. "Hymie's taking me home."

"Hymie?"

She nodded toward the pale-faced youth.

"Huh!" said Eddie. "Well, has he got you tied down so that you couldn't take dinner with me some evening?"

"Sure, I can do that! Why not? I can tell you a lot that's behind that front of Baldy's. If you want my telephone number——"

He took it and she drifted away with the crowd, back to Hamar's apartment, leaving Eddie standing alone on the Broadway sidewalk. All sorts of women seemed to be leaving him standing alone.

EDDIE cursed himself and Marie—he couldn't get up the heart to curse Marge, even now. He cursed himself for being able to get up even a temporary interest in another girl, when his heart had just been shriveled up forever. He cursed Marie for preferring the unhealthy-looking Hymie to himself.

Still, she had said she'd go to dinner with him some evening. And how could she or anybody else go to dinner with him, when he had no job and only five dollars in his pocket? Why had he made that foolish gesture, merely to keep up a front, to make her go on thinking that he was what he seemed to be, a prosperous man about town? For the first time since he had come to New York, Eddie Reeve began to lose his nerve. He was broke and unemployed, thrown over by the girl he loved—alone in the great city. Yes, that was what hurt—alone. Really alone for the first time.

Undeniably New York was a hard town; if you wanted to beat it you had to be hard yourself, not easy-going and good-natured—hard, like Mrs. McCune. She had the right idea, Eddie concluded. And this charitable thought turned his eyes again toward the waste-paper can from which a battered corner of the gilt frame protruded.

Mrs. McCune thought a good deal of that picture. Perhaps her feeling was absurd, but Eddie supposed that most strong affections must seem absurd to outsiders. She'd miss this picture. It would be only a charitable act to salvage it and take it back to her. He might do some good to others even if he could no longer do any good to himself.

He picked it out of the can, with some idea of getting the doorman to

take charge of it; but the doorman was talking to the red-lipped girl at the ticket window. It wasn't so very late—he might take it back to the rooming house to-night——

But Eddie had seen enough of that rooming house, for one day. He couldn't stand another glance at the stuffy parlor where Marge had cast him off. To-morrow, perhaps, or the next day. He could carry the picture home under his overcoat, keep it in the closet of his room at the club and then restore it at his leisure, when Mrs. McCune would have given up hope of seeing it again, and might display some plain human fellowship toward the young man who brought back her one treasure.

Tucking it out of sight under his overcoat to avoid curious scrutiny and ribald jest, he started homeward, toward the fraternity club.

AT that moment Mrs. McCune, having finished her minute exploration of the room lately vacated by Mr. Binley, was going over the room that had been occupied by Marge Lanneaux. Not often, but now and then, roomers had been known to leave articles of value behind them when they made hasty departure, articles of value which they saw no more.

Mrs. McCune discovered no articles of value in Marge's room, but she did find one or two things of interest. One was in the desk drawer, a mass of typewritten manuscript with "Vivien Vaile, 190-D West Forty-ninth Street," in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. Mrs. McCune looked at the first sentence:

> I wonder if all good women have within them the seeds of degradation such as mine. For I, too, was a good woman once——

"It was a long time ago, I'll bet," said Mrs. McCune. "I'll keep this—it looks pretty blue. And a diary, at that —— Hello!"

She stooped over the wastebasket and picked out a big photograph—half torn across, but still an effective and unmistakable likeness of Marge Lanneaux.

"Huh! Picture of herself, eh? And she kept it out of sight all this time! Wonder why she did that, now? Her kind don't hide their own face without some good reason—— Ah, hah! I wonder, now——"

But her wonderment was interrupted by shouts from below. In one bound Mrs. McCune reached the banister and looked down the stair well. Four flights below, the red-headed mulatto maid was gesticulating wildly.

"Your picture's gone! The crayon portrait——"

"What?" shrieked Mrs. McCune, and went down the four flights of stairs in standing leaps, as the devil went through Athlone.

Desperately she hoped that Nellie had lost her mind, till she came down to the parlor, searched frantically in every corner—in vain.

Nellie had shrunk into a nook behind the door, dreading an explosion of her mistress' wrath. But Mrs. McCune, in the face of a real disaster, was cool and competent.

"Gone," she muttered. "Now which —— Binley? No. Too much rum, not enough bean. She was always havin' something to say about it, that Vaile woman. Always some smart crack. Thinks she'll be funny, does she? And I never could find out where she worked, never met anybody that had heard of her—— Nellie! Go get the police on the telephone—no, not the Forty-seventh Street station, the detective bureau. Ask for Inspector McGuire—I want to talk to him myself."

Nellie, still numb with apprehension, moved slowly out into the hall.

"Hurry up!" said Mrs. McCune sharply. "You dumb fool, there's no time to lose. All the money I ever saved—twelve thousand dollars in Lib-

erty Bonds—is squeezed in behind that picture with the board frame tacked down over it. Twelve thousand! Well, if she's got my picture, I've got hers and if there's money in mine, why, maybe hers will be worth a little money, too."

CHAPTER VIII.

SITTING PRETTY.

AT eleven o'clock the next morning Marge Lanneaux lay back, in languid delight, in a steaming scented bath in the Minaret Hotel. She had slept out, slept as much as she liked, had lounged in bed, languid and lazy, and then got up to order the sumptuous and abundant breakfast which was even now being laid in her bedroom. She knew she couldn't afford to breakfast in the Minaret, on her seventy-five dollars, but this morning—just for this once—she had felt like pampering herself.

The warm bath was pampering enough, for that matter. In Mrs. McCune's establishment so much hot water could have been assembled only by crafty scheming, by waiting till the middle of the afternoon when nobody else wanted a bath, and it was sacrilege to think of Mrs. McCune's glazed iron tub while she lay in this huge built-in tank of gleaming porcelain. The tiled walls gleamed, too, in their checkerboard pattern of faint green and white. A whole winter's weariness, a whole week's cold terror since she lost her job, were steaming out of Marge as she lounged in the hot water and took a childish pleasure in putting off her breakfast because she knew the coffee would be kept hot.

Mrs. Julian Reeve would have a bathroom more sumptuous than this one; she would breakfast in her room, at her own convenience—— But would she, now?

Marge sat up suddenly; the air of the bathroom, steamy though it was, seemed cold to her bare wet shoulders; the chill drove into her. Mrs. Julian Reeve would certainly have to get up to breakfast with Julian, before he went to the factory, and she knew he was always at his desk by half past eight. Sleeping till eleven was something that the eventual Mrs. Julian Reeve, whoever she might be, simply could not do.

No, it wouldn't be all luxury! Well, Marge told herself, it shouldn't be all luxury. She ought to work, contribute her part to their joint enterprise; that was what she would have had to do if she had married Eddie, that was what she would have to do if she married Julian. But it was hard to imagine anybody but Julian contributing anything to an enterprise in which Julian was involved. And if she were going to have to get up early anyway, she might as well marry Eddie and get some satisfaction out of it——

Silly! But—— Poor Eddie! Or was it poor Marge? At any rate, the enjoyment of the bath was dissipated. She dried herself quickly, threw on her negligee and came out to breakfast.

It was a good breakfast and copious. The check which she signed with a shiver came to two dollars and thirty cents. But Marge had once kept house, in an apartment with two other girls; hastily she calculated that even a breakfast like this, in her own home, wouldn't cost more than half a dollar. The thing could be done, on a salary—still more on two salaries. But it couldn't be done on the proceeds of stories for *Heart Confessions,* even if she could bring herself to write another; she doubted if it could be done on Eddie's play. She mistrusted Eddie as the author of anything but press-agent yarns.

SHE finished breakfast and lit a cigarette. The telephone rang and she recognized Julian's voice.

"Hello! Miss Lanneaux? Oh! Is that you, darling?"

"This is Marge," she temporized; she couldn't help it, if her voice seemed cold.

"I've had a lot of trouble finding you," he complained. "I thought you were still at Pankhurst House."

"Oh, I got tired of being entirely surrounded by women," she said lightly. "I thought I'd move to the Minaret."

"Actors and actresses stay there, don't they?" His tone made it clear that Julian had a firm opinion about actors and actresses.

"Yes," said Marge. "Actors and actresses and race-track gamblers and motion-picture producers and United States senators and fiction writers and real-estate operators and in short all the useless and parasitical classes."

"Uh!" said Julian. "That's where Eddie works, isn't it?"

"Eddie? Goodness, no. He hasn't been here for a long time."

"Where is he?"

"Why, he's got an apartment somewhere——"

"Yes, his mother told me that. I mean, what is he doing?"

"Why, the last time I saw him he said he was writing a play."

"Ah!" said Julian. "I suspected he'd come to something like that."

"Yes, I suppose before long he'll be making a thousand dollars a week——"

"Do people make that much out of plays?"

"Some people do."

"Eddie won't," said Julian, with conviction. "Marge, darling—I have to lunch at the Bankers' Club with a man from the Morgan firm—one of the partners—but I hope you're free for dinner."

"I am," she admitted. "I'm free for lunch, too."

"Hello!" said Julian. "That switchboard girl must have cut us off. I was just saying that I have to take lunch with one of the partners in the Morgan firm."

"Oh, isn't that magnificent? All right—we'll meet at dinner."

"We'll do a lot of meeting," said Julian eagerly. "I was hoping you'd pour tea at the formal opening of the factory's New York office to-morrow—it will be rather a social affair—and then I suppose I ought to spare one evening for Eddie. He'll want to entertain us a——"

"Us?" she gasped.

"I don't suppose his entertainment will be anything very brilliant," remarked Julian, "but I ought to see him for the family's sake. I believe in keeping up old associations."

"But, Julian! Why should he entertain us? You, maybe, but not us."

"His mother must have given him some idea how things stand between us."

"Yes?" said Marge. "How do they stand?"

But Julian was still talking.

"My attentions to you were so marked when you were home at Christmas that it must be fairly obvious——"

"Grr!" said Marge, but she held her hand over the transmitter as she said it. Husbands got on their wives' nerves, so it was nothing fatal if Julian got on her nerves—nothing to break off about. But she wished he wouldn't do it quite so regularly.

"I suppose you'll hear from Eddie," she suggested. "His mother must have told him you were coming."

"I suppose so. Do you see him?"

"Oh, once in a long while," said Marge. "But you'll see him. He—he's very proud of your success."

"Oh, is he? It always seemed to me that he was rather jealous of me back home—rather envious—but I suppose he's got a more mature point of view by now. I'll call for you at seven, then. Good-by, darling."

Marge slammed the receiver on the hook.

"Blah!" she groaned. "I wonder if

all good women have within them the seeds of degradation such as mine! But it isn't his money. He is good and useful, in his way. Anyhow, I don't have to see him till dinner."

But it was a long time till dinner, after that late breakfast which made lunch impossible. By two o'clock Marge found herself asking the Minaret mail clerk if he had a forwarding address for Mr. Edwin Reeve. He had, but it was against the rules to give it out. By three o'clock she was in the manager's office, explaining that she was from Mr. Reeve's home town and had an important message from his family.

In circumstances like that, said the manager, they could tell her Mr. Reeve's whereabouts. She slipped out of his office and into a telephone booth to learn that there was no telephone listed at that address.

At four o'clock Marge was ringing the bell at a rooming house just off Madison Square and presently talking to a landlady not altogether unlike Mrs. McCune. Mr. Reeve had moved last night, to the Kappa Chi Club.

Marge telephoned to the Kappa Chi Club; Mr. Reeve was out.

"Well!" she told herself furiously. "Why not? Didn't I tell him just yesterday afternoon that I never wanted to see him again, unless he was asked to meet Julian's fiancée? And now he's spent all his money for club dues just so he can put up a front, the poor little idiot—God bless him!"

CHAPTER IX.

A SMALL-TOWN MAN.

EDDIE, as it happened, was just then on his way to see Julian. He hadn't wanted to see Julian so soon; he had called up the Ritz in full confidence that Julian was out. The news that Eddie had called in vain would meet Julian when he came back to dress for dinner, would prove Eddie's eagerness to see him, his sense of family solidarity, and would hint at Eddie's busy preoccupation, with his work and his circle. That would be enough for two or three days and in two or three days Eddie might somehow have assembled enough money to entertain Julian as Julian would expect.

But this strategy was ruined by the fact that Julian himself answered the telephone.

"Oh, hello!" said Eddie cheerlessly. "I wondered if I'd be lucky enough to find you."

"I just came in. I've been lunching at the Bankers' Club with a partner in the Morgan firm——"

"Good house, Morgan's," Eddie assured him. "Bright lot of fellows they've got there. It's great to hear your voice again, Julian. Can you come over for tea?"

"To your apartment?"

"No, to my club."

"I never have time for tea," said Julian. "But if you can, Eddie, I wish you'd come up to the Ritz. I'd like to discuss one or two matters of—er—some consequence. I have a dinner engagement, but if you can come over now we can have a pleasant conversation and one which perhaps you may find profitable."

The same old Julian. Eddie wanted to say "Go to hell!" but Julian's overwhelming manner, Julian's overshadowing prestige, had their way with him as usual; he was lucky to be able to hang up before he heard himself saying, "Thank you, sir."

Julian's presence was quite as impressive as Julian's voice. He was undeniably bald; he was undeniably fat. But behind the fat was the solid frame of one who had been an All-Western full back and beneath the shiny bald skull, cold blue eyes gleamed under overhanging brown eyebrows, the blue eyes of a masterful executive, who could raise a six-per-cent dividend to

eighteen without impairing surplus and reserves for taxes and expansion.

"You're looking well, Eddie."

"Feeling fine, Jule."

Julian's brows drew together.

"I don't like nicknames," he announced.

"Why, you didn't call me Edwin, so——"

"Everybody calls you Eddie. Nobody ever called me Jule."

"What, nobody? Sorry, Julian—my mistake. Well, how's Royalmont?"

"Coming ahead fast. The unofficial census shows an increase of fifteen thousand in the population in the past year; the assessed valuation has increased twenty millions; the new boulevard——"

"Never mind," said Eddie. "I know it would bore you to go over all that again, after you've just been telling it to Morgan. And there's no need to ask you how the factory's doing, when you're going to open a New York office."

"Yes," said Julian comfortably, "I felt that our position required an Eastern headquarters. So far as sales are concerned, the agency we've been connected with for the past twenty years did well enough, but an establishment of the caliber of ours ought to have a place of its own in keeping with its position. We're going to have it rather richly furnished, a place for advertisement and display and in a sense for social purposes, as much as for business. I expect to be in New York a good deal, in future—— What's that?"

"Nothing," said Eddie. "Just thought I was going to sneeze."

"And," Julian finished, "I felt that to meet business men of standing on the proper footing I ought to have an establishment of my own."

"Quite right," said Eddie. "I don't know much about business, but there's nothing like standing on a footing, especially in New York. What's on your mind, Julian? You said you had some matters of consequence——"

"Oh!" said Julian. "Yes." But he seemed reluctant to get to the point of the matter.

"Why," he resumed after a pause, "for one thing—it's not important, of course—— I can get good Scotch in Royalmont, but it costs twelve dollars a quart. I thought perhaps you——"

"Twelve dollars? They're robbing you. Here, I believe, you can get very good stuff for four or five. I don't know—I never drink it, myself."

"On the wagon?" Julian inquired, in a jocular tone.

"Oh, not a bit; but Scotch seems rather common. Everybody drinks it. I prefer wines——"

"Champagne, I suppose?"

"Oh, I drink champagne occasionally, when I'm out at a restaurant."

"I suppose you can buy it in almost any restaurant now," said Julian, with some eagerness.

"Why, you can if you're known. I don't say that *you* could, without an introduction; but I'm around a good deal, of course, and know lots of people——"

"I'd liked to be introduced at some of those champagne restaurants. I—I have an engagement for dinner this evening, but later on——"

"I'd been hoping you could dine with me to-morrow," said Eddie, nerving himself for the plunge. "I—I think we can get some champagne. And I can find out about the Scotch, if you can wait till I call up one or two people to-morrow——"

"To-morow will do," said Julian reluctantly.

"You had me scared," Eddie admitted, "when you talked about discussing matters of consequence. I thought maybe somebody in the family back home had cancer, or something. But I might have known that there was only one topic that would interest a wealthy

gentleman from the interior on a visit to New York."

"That wasn't the only thing I wanted to talk about," returned Julian. "I'd like to talk to you a little about yourself, Eddie."

"About me?" said Eddie, alert as a sentry who hears a prowler in the night. "What's the matter with me? I'm getting along fine."

"Still in your apartment?"

"No, I've moved to my club. The servant problem's pretty serious, you know; I couldn't be bothered hiring and firing one man after another."

"You're not regularly engaged in any occupation at present?"

"Why, I'm writing a play. If you don't believe that's work, try it."

"Oh, I've no doubt it requires effort, but it's very uncertain, Eddie. You've been here six years; you're twenty-eight years old; as your cousin, as, in a way, the head of the family, I rather feel a certain responsibility for you, Eddie. I'd like to see you well settled in some secure position."

"I'm secure enough," Eddie lied gallantly.

"Oh, I've no doubt you lead an easy bohemian life among your artistic friends; but there's nothing secure and settled, nothing—well, yes, it's the only word—nothing solid about being a press agent, or writing plays. What you need, Eddie, is a connection with something of assured stability, where you can use your acquaintance among newspaper men and such persons for some useful purpose. Young Markham is coming on from Royalmont to take charge of our New York office. Really he needs no assistant, except a stenographer; but I thought that it would in the long run be profitable to us as well as to you if I appointed you as his assistant——"

"Me?"

"Why not you? I—— The occasions on which the Royalmont Carpet Company needs publicity are not very numerous, but I know that press agents are called suppress agents and I know that there is more in that than a joke. We have certain matters pending with the treasury—questions of capital valuation and amortization and excess profits—and it would be highly desirable to keep that sort of thing out of the papers. And it would give you an assured position; I think we could adjust the salary at a figure rather higher than your real value would justify, at first——"

"Uh!" said Eddie. He had meant to say "Go to hell!" but that was something people simply didn't say, to Julian.

"Some of these days," said Julian paternally, "you'll be wanting to get married——"

"Oh, no!" But even as he shook his head Eddie was pondering, calculating. If he had a steady job with a good salary, Marge might be willing to take a chance; she did like him better than Julian, he was convinced. And though the job depended on Julian, even Julian wouldn't dare discharge him for taking Marge away from him.

ONCE more Eddie shook his head and that with decision. It couldn't be done. Even if he could hold the job, even if he could persuade Marge to marry him, it would be a trick, and a rather low trick. If he ever beat Julian, he would beat him in the open, not by a trick. Besides, he could imagine no worse hell than working for Julian. Better to take his chances; Marge might not marry Julian, after all.

"Very well," said Julian, "if you feel that way. I think you're stupid to refuse a chance that might be the making of you, but it's your privilege. By the way—you know Marge Lanneaux, I suppose?"

"Certainly I know her. We were in high school together."

"I mean, do you know her in New York?"

"Oh, yes. I see her now and then."

"Quite right," said Julian. "People who come from the same town ought to keep in touch, even in New York. There's nothing like keeping up old associations. Marge is living at the Minaret Hotel now."

"So I understand," said Eddie automatically. She had done it, then—plunged with her last chance bit of money to keep up a front and Eddie gave her three silent cheers. She had behaved as a woman of spirit ought to behave.

"And she used to live at Pankhurst House," Julian went on. "I should think that would be a much more suitable place of residence for her. A woman alone—a young and attractive woman—should live in a woman's hotel where she could find sympathy and assistance in case of need."

"Have you ever seen Marge in need of sympathy and assistance?" asked Eddie hotly. "No, you haven't and neither has anybody else! She may need it now and then, but nobody ever sees her need it. Not Marge."

"You don't know her so well as I do, Eddie. When she was at home at Christmas, she looked tired. And the Minaret is no place for her—big and ostentatious and expensive. Er—Eddie!"

"Yes?" When Julian spoke in that tone it was hard for anybody not to answer, "Yes, sir."

"Just what sort of a place is the Minaret?" Julian inquired.

"Why, you know it—by reputation, anyway. It's on Broadway—pretty nearly the last of the old set of big Broadway hotels that's left, except the Astor. Not so ritzy as the hotels east of the Avenue, of course, but still pretty fluff——"

"Is it a respectable hotel?"

"What quaint archaic language you use!" said Eddie. "Is any hotel respectable? Is New York a respectable town, or Chicago, or Royalmont? The Minaret, like New York or Royalmont, contains some people who aren't respectable and some who are. If you mean, does an unmarried girl lose caste by living there—hell, no! A hotel has to be pretty tough to declass its residents, these days. And if it was that kind, you know Marge wouldn't live there. She's wise."

"Too wise," said Julian. "When she was home at Christmas, she created quite a good deal of comment by smoking in public. Women who smoke in Royalmont do it behind closed doors. I told her."

"Yes?" Eddie inquired with interest. "And what did she tell you?"

"She's very self-willed," said Julian, with a shrug. "But that is beside the point. I don't believe the Minaret is safe——"

"Safe? Why not?"

"With all these holdups—— I read that your bobbed-haired girl bandit committed a robbery in the Minaret."

"She and her kind go after jewels and Marge hasn't got any. At least she didn't have the last time I saw her," Eddie added, wondering if Julian had already plunged on a ring.

"Not yet," said Julian, and then caught himself. "You—you don't know why she moved, do you—from Pankhurst House to the Minaret?"

"Why shouldn't she move? The Pankhurst is a sort of barrack—clean and comfortable, but not luxurious."

"How can she afford luxury, on her salary?"

"Why, hadn't you heard?" Eddie inquired with a beaming smile. "She threw up her job to write fiction."

"What the devil! Why should she do that?"

"Why, to make more money."

"Make money? Marge? She couldn't make money writing fiction."

"Well," said Eddie, with the patriotic enthusiasm of one who helps his friends keep up a front, "the answer to that is that while she was on a salary, she lived at Pankhurst House and now that she's on her own, she lives at the Minaret. I happened to see one of her checks the last time I called on her, and—— Well, it was only for a single short story, but it was for quite a substantial sum. Enough to keep her at the Minaret for quite a while."

"Amazing!" said Julian. "I'd never have thought it." He was obviously disturbed by this proof of Marge's independence and yet Eddie could see that his disturbance was mingled with admiration. To Julian, ability to make money was the final, the ultimate, proof of merit.

"Well, Eddie," he resumed with a sigh, "I'm glad you've cleared this up. After all, we who stayed back home know so little about what our friends in New York are doing and we hear so much about what's being done in New York—— We never quite know, do we?"

"Never quite know what?" asked Eddie irritably.

"Oh, how our friends are living! It —it worried me a little to see Marge blossoming out in this sudden splendor. I—I may tell you, Eddie, that she and I are going to be married."

"Congratulations!" said Eddie with a synthetic enthusiasm that he had cooked up on his way to Julian's hotel and kept warm in the oven till the time should come to serve it. "She's a fine girl, Julian."

"Yes, she is. I—— She'll have to get over her New York ways, of course, when she lives in Royalmont. I—I wasn't quite sure—your ideas are so different here—and I want to be reassured before I quite committed myself. But you've reassured me——"

"Marge didn't need any reassurance, of course?" Eddie suggested.

"Oh, she knew all about me. My life is an open book. If I have seemed to be a little doubtful about her, it was only because I don't like this shabby bohemian life that you young people live in New York. I've offered to take you out of it, but if you prefer to go your own way, I can't compel you. But at any rate I can take Marge out of it —take her back to Royalmont."

"I congratulate you," said Eddie amiably, "and above all I congratulate her. When we leave the old home town we all dream of going back, some day, in splendor, to show the gang that stayed behind how well we've put ourselves over. But Marge could never have dreamed of going back as Mrs. Julian Reeve."

"Well," said Julian, "I've been feeling for some time that I ought to marry. A man in my position ought to have children—shouldn't be compelled to leave his property to hospitals, or universities, or parcel it out among a lot of dependent relatives—no offense, Eddie. I didn't mean you."

"I didn't suppose you meant me," remarked Eddie.

"I hadn't made up my mind just whom I wanted to marry," said Julian. "You know, eligible bachelors are rather scarce around Royalmont and it seemed safe to take my time and look them over. And then Marge came home at Christmas and, while I don't like this New York bohemianism that she seems to enjoy so much, it seemed to me that she was about what I wanted. Get her away from her old associations and she's just the woman for me. And so long as she hasn't involved herself too deeply in this life of the Gay White Way——"

"Glad you take my word for it. Most men would have asked for a testimonial from her pastor."

"Well," said Julian defensively, "I just wanted to be sure before I—er—committed myself——"

EDDIE glared at him, trying hard to hide his anger. So Julian wouldn't have committed himself, if Marge hadn't got a recommendation from Eddie! Marge would never know what she owed him.

"Well, Julian, I'll have to be going, if you're so busy. But remember—you're dining with me to-morrow night."

"Oh, certainly. Where?"

"Why—why—I haven't just made up my mind as yet. What do you like—quiet and intimate, or loud and splashy?"

"Well, so long as this is my first visit in years, suppose we make it loud and splashy? We dress, I suppose."

"Oh, certainly." said Eddie, with a clubman's boredom. "Suppose we go up to the Minaret roof—they all know me there. I'll meet you in the lounge there, at seven. And if you're taking Marge out to-night, just mention my name to the head waiter, if you happen to dine at the Minaret, or Montholon's, or Cadenabbia's, and you can get some champagne."

CHAPTER X.

A HUNDRED-DOLLAR BILL.

THAT was true, Eddie reflected as he walked back to the club. Julian could get champagne, by mentioning Eddie's name and showing his own money. But where could Eddie, with only five dollars to back up his acquaintance with head waiters, get the champagne that would keep up his front before Julian?

A careless word from Marge, of course, could puncture that front offhand. Julian would tell her he was going to dinner with Eddie and a word or a look from Marge could betray the truth. But Eddie knew that Marge would never betray him; whatever happened she would lie for him as he had lied for her.

Marge was going to marry Julian and when she was married she would be all married; she would be for Julian, even to the extent, if necessary, of being against Eddie. But even if she were against Eddie hereafter, she would be loyal to the past. She had a code, the code of a gentleman; the more exacting code of a totterer on the ragged edge, who never betrays a fellow totterer trying to keep up a front.

Marge wouldn't give him away, but he might give himself away. How could he entertain Julian as Julian expected to be entertained, with evening dress and cover charges and champagne. on the five dollars he had left? It would be less than five dollars, for Eddie had to eat—eat now, as well as to-morow. The problem was too much, so he gave it up, dined abundantly, but not well, at a cheap restaurant and walked back to the club lounge to think over the hopeless puzzle once more.

The club was almost empty save for the bridge players in the back room. Eddie settled down on a leather chair and rolled cigarettes, one after another, and wished the devil would come along and make him an offer for his soul. The soul wasn't worth much anyway, without Marge; and what little there was left of it would be shriveled if he couldn't make good in Julian's eyes to-morrow night.

A man sat down on the other end of the couch and lit a cigar. The glow of the match between cupped hands illumined a dark brooding face and Eddie thought for a wild instant that his prayer had been answered.

"The devil!" he grunted.

"Hello, Eddie!" The other man tossed away his match and Eddie saw that it was by no means the devil. In fact, it was the person who by office might be regarded as the devil's worst enemy—the Honorable John P. Carlton.

Five years before, when Eddie was a reporter and John P. Carlton an un-

known young criminal lawyer, they had met every day for months, had often dined together. Carlton was defending an intensely guilty gentleman who had committed a quite unnecessary murder and Eddie was covering the story. Eventually Carlton had got his client acquitted, to his own great renown; he had gone on upward and now he was district attorney, while Eddie Reeve was a playwright without money, a press agent without a job.

"Didn't know you belonged to this club," Eddie observed.

"I don't come around very often, but I figured that it would be almost empty at this time of the evening. And I want solitude."

"What's the matter with home?"

"I'm married," said Carlton. "Also I'm district attorney. I don't like prohibition any better than you do, but it's one of the laws I'm bound to enforce and I have the idea—unusual among public officials, I admit—that I ought to enforce it on myself as well as on others. When I was elected, Mrs. Carlton and I dumped all our stuff down the sewer. We haven't had a drink since. And what is home without the old accustomed shock absorber? No place to spend the evening—I can tell you that. But it's the law and I've got to enforce it—without much help from the police."

"I guess they have troubles of their own," said Eddie. "This bobbed-haired girl bandit is making them look silly."

"I hope she won't make me look silly," Carlton sighed. "If they ever catch her, I've got to convict her. I've got half a dozen of her victims lined up to identify her, but all they can tell me now is that she wears black bobbed hair and a squirrel coat. There aren't more than a quarter of a million girls in New York who fit that description. Still, I suppose they'll know her when they see her, if the police ever give them the chance. But that doesn't worry me half as much as how I'm going to enforce prohibition."

"Why try? Nobody else ever tried it around here, hard enough to hurt."

"Nobody ever went about it the right way. They arrest waiters who get acquitted by the jury. I don't blame the jury at all. The waiter's only a tool; it's the man higher up who gets the profit. But the law also provides that you can get an injunction against a place that sells it, by simply appealing to a judge. No jury trial at all; no taking chances with public sentiment. The judge gives you an injunction and first thing you know the place is padlocked, no matter what it is or who owns it. And before long, Eddie, you're going to see padlocks on some very distinguished doors."

"That will make you popular."

"It will make me popular up State."

"People up State don't vote in town."

"No, but they vote for governor; and a man who makes a spectacular reputation as district attorney has a good chance of being governor. The farmers up State are all for prohibition, now that that judge down at Baltimore has decided that they can make their own home-brew within the law, and they always love anything that annoys the wicked city.

"I HAVE some ideas about things I could do as governor," he went on, "things that need to be done. I don't like this job I've got now; but it calls for enforcement of the law and, by the Great I Am, so long as I'm district attorney the law will be enforced!"

"Don't be too sure that will send you to Albany," said Eddie. "Lots of people want to be our next governor—including my late boss, Mr. Justin Amidon."

"I heard you'd left the Minaret," said Carlton, "but I didn't know why."

"I'm writing plays," Eddie began, but there was no reason why he need keep up a front before Carlton. "Why," he admitted, "I was bounced out on my ear." And, since Carlton seemed sympathetic, he told him the story of his summary dismissal.

"In the best Amidon manner," said Carlton softly. "If you hadn't helped out the night desks on that story—if you'd let him get up stage and try to kill it—all the papers would be set against him; but now they're all ready to give him an even break when he tries for the governorship. You've helped him a lot, Eddie."

"I know it. I hope he chokes."

"He's a big man in the organization," Carlton resumed, "and he's popular outside of it. Whenever he gives a million dollars away, he sees that he gets a million dollars' worth of ballyhoo. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a multimillionaire to get elected to public office; but the thing has been done. And unless the next governor of New York is John P. Carlton, it's pretty sure to be Justin Amidon."

"You get my vote!" said Eddie. "I'd like to meet that old wooden Indian on a dark night with none of his yes-men around. You couldn't call that murder, could you, John?"

"You talk as if you hold a grudge."

"Grudge? Why not? He bounced me out of a happy home and a good salary."

"He could afford to pay a good salary," said Carlton. "The Minaret's making big money. Why not, when the roof garden sells champagne at twenty-five a quart—the same stuff you could get from any honest bootlegger for six? Most hotels won't do that. They leave it to restaurants to sell the stuff; with a five-million-dollar investment, it's too risky. But Amidon thinks his political drag will save him, so his hotel sells it and gets the bulk of the night dancing trade that doesn't go to the clubs."

"I guess he's safe, even from you," said Eddie gloomily. "You may pull a few low dives, but you could never convict Amidon."

"I know it. And if I convicted one of his waiters—which is a big *if*—for Amidon would hire the best lawyers in town and I know that things can be done to a jury—why, Amidon would slip him enough to pay his fine and the game would go right on. But if we could get a judge—a judge whose political connections weren't with Amidon's crowd—to padlock the place——"

"Padlock the Minaret?" cried Eddie in horror. "A thousand-room hotel?"

"Why not? We padlock some poor little Italian restaurant for the same thing and then try to pretend that there's one law for rich and poor alike. Well, if I padlock the Minaret, it's blazoned on the front page of every paper in the United States that there *is* one law for rich and poor alike, so long as that law is enforced by John P. Carlton. Justin Amidon gets his, just like Tony, the neighborhood wine maker. And then is Justin Amidon our next governor? He is not. John P. Carlton is our next governor!"

"Maybe so," said Eddie doubtfully. "I'd hate to see the old Minaret pulled—it's a good old dump, all but the bird who owns it. But if, when Justin Amidon draws the black bean, you hear three loud cheers in this part of town, you'll know they come from me."

"I haven't got him yet, my boy. Got to get the evidence first. I can't go up to the Minaret roof and buy champagne. If I asked the police to do it, they'd promise to try, but they wouldn't get any evidence. I don't know how and I don't know why, but they wouldn't be able to buy anything. But if a young fellow with a smooth manner and good evening clothes and a pretty girl across the table—or better

yet, a party of friends—if a fellow like that ordered champagne, he'd get it. And then the padlock would click on the political ambitions of Justin Amidon."

"You'd have hard work finding anybody like that who's for prohibition, in this town."

"Yes, but I might find somebody who had a grievance against Amidon."

"Huh?" said Eddie. "Talking to me, eh?"

"Talking to you. It would cost you nothing—I'll slip you a hundred or so of my own money, so that you can make it a real party. Nothing vulgar; you don't have to call a cop. Just enjoy the evening, then come down and tell me about it next morning—and Amidon is through."

"But, John, it's dirty work—stool-pigeon stuff——"

"It's law enforcement, my boy. They didn't ask you and me when they made the law; we didn't get a chance to vote on it. They just jammed it down on us and left us to enforce it. I could make you a speech about disregard for one law meaning the ruin of all laws—the speech I make to men's clubs in the churches on Sunday evening—but you wouldn't believe it. Instead, I remind you that here is your chance to get back at Amidon."

"Let somebody else do it."

"I can't, or my assistants, or even my friends; known associates of a new district attorney couldn't buy anything. It's got to be somebody I rarely see—like you, somebody I can trust—like you. If my sleuth gets into trouble he can't appeal to me for help; I don't appear till I say my say in court. That means that it's got to be some slick boy with a level head who won't get into trouble. I put up the money and he does the rest."

"It's dirty work," Eddie repeated.

"It's law enforcement—and it's giving Amidon what's due him. Hasn't he ever done any dirty work? Make up your mind, Eddie. for I want quick action. I'd say to-night, but it's too late to get up a party. But if you could pull it to-morrow night—— Hell, Eddie, you could do it! You've got the front; you know the waiters; you could get up a party that looks like a party, not like a raid."

"To-morrow night?" Eddie repeated in a daze. "To-morrow night; dinner with Julian; three dollars and twenty cents——

"You wouldn't pinch the waiters?" he asked sharply.

"No, I don't want to bother with the waiters. I'm after the man higher up. Let the waiters off and padlock Amidon. And in all likelihood your name would never have to come out at all—you tell me and I tell the judge and Amidon won't dare to fight it in court. He'll curl up and shut up."

"Did you say a hundred?" Eddie asked. "Have you got it with you?"

The district attorney produced a roll, peeled a dozen dollar bills off the top and produced from its center a big yellowback bearing a most ostentatious "C."

"Now don't worry about what your friends will think about this," he said. "They'll never know."

They would never know—nor did Eddie care much about anybody's opinion of him, now that Marge no longer had any opinion of him.

"All right!" He sighed. "I'll bring the news to your office day after to-morrow."

"Remember, some good citizen has to do the dirty work," Carlton exhorted him. "And remember it's a public service to put the bee on Amidon."

"I'd tell you to go to the devil," said Eddie sourly, "if you and I hadn't gone there already!"

But what else could he have done? Eddie hadn't sold his soul, after all, to glut his hatred of Amidon. He had

done it because, in Julian's presence, a front must be kept up at any price.

CHAPTER XI.

TIME TO DECIDE.

AT half past eleven Eddie went to bed, to lie awake for hours looking back on the various times—seven, to be exact—when he had asked Marge to marry him. On four of those seven occasions, it seemed in retrospect, he might have persuaded her with a little more persistence or a little more deftness. But it was too late now. He had lost her, and Julian, who had everything else, was to get the greatest prize of all, the final proof of his overwhelming and unarguable superiority.

Julian had everything; Julian was going to get Marge; and just for good measure Julian's trip to New York had compelled Eddie to turn stool pigeon and sell his soul. If only he could involve Julian in the same ruin that was to befall Justin Amidon——

Eddie couldn't, of course. Nobody could ruin Julian. But before he went to sleep at last, Eddie had thought of an expedient which would at least give Julian some unhappy moments and enable Eddie to keep another engagement as well. After all, Carlton had said it would look better if he had a pretty girl with him.

Julian, meanwhile, was having the time of his life, despite Marge's reluctance to meet him halfway. He had had to wait for her, before dinner, in the hotel lobby, where he didn't dare to kiss her. And during their dinner at Montholon's—where Eddie's name and the sight of Julian's roll had enabled them to get champagne—she had managed to turn the conversation, every time he got down to matrimony.

Still, the dinner had been good and the champagne had been good and Julian couldn't help it if Marge perceived the thickness of his yellowbacked roll as he gave the waiter two twenties and a ten. They had gone off to the "Follies" and, because the orchestra was all sold out, Julian had had to buy a box. Not so bad, that, to sit uplifted above the crowd, where everybody could see them—Marge with her curling dark hair, her wine-red evening gown—Marge, glittering with jewels.

Jewels! He had supposed she had no jewels; even Eddie had intimated that she had no jewels. But her slim fingers were heavy with dinner rings; diamonds and emeralds sparkled on a platinum hoop around her firm white arm; a diamond pendant glittered on her breast. Julian tried to compute their cost as they watched the show; it must run up to—— Why, these were more jewels than he would expect to give her in the first two years of marriage. There must be money in writing fiction, or else——

He had a burning desire to ask her about the jewels, but he couldn't distract her till the show was out. And then, as they took a taxi for the slow four-block progression back to the Minaret, he found her mere closeness to him, the tickling of his ear by her fur collar, so exciting that he forgot about the jewels.

He would have liked to kiss her, get her to tell him that she had made up her mind—not that he had any doubt about it. But this taxi was all windows and, in the long column of automobiles moving slowly up Broadway, they were as much on display as if they were standing on a street corner.

But, at the hotel, she had admitted that she could eat a little supper; so they had gone up to the Minaret roof and ordered sandwiches and a bottle of champagne. They had danced to the music of that very orchestra that Julian had heard over the radio, at home in Royalmont; and now they sat comfortably at their table, the champagne bubbling in their hollow-stemmed glasses, a

glittering, chattering crowd drinking and dancing around them. Julian had to admit that while the life of the Gay White Way was bad as a steady diet, especially for a good woman who was going to make a solid marriage, it was pleasurable enough on an infrequent visit to New York.

THE smoke of his cigar curled up from their table; Marge took out a heavy cigarette case, striped in gold and platinum, and lit a match. Automatically he frowned; she saw the frown, lit her cigarette and blew a ring of smoke at him.

"You can't do that in Royalmont," he warned her. "All right in your own home, or at parties—most of the girls we know smoke at home. But not in public."

"Why not?" Marge asked. "If they smoke at home, everybody must know it."

"Everybody does know it. But they don't smoke in public. It isn't the custom."

"Then I'll start the custom," said Marge, "if I go back."

"If?" he repeated. "I thought you'd made up your mind."

Marge stared sullenly across the dancing floor.

"Oh, I thought I had, too, but—— I'm terribly wishy-washy and changeable, Julian."

"You'll get over that," he said comfortably. "After all, the time comes when we all have to settle down."

"Settle down? How tempting!"

"Marge, if this Broadway life has got into your blood——"

"I don't say it's got into my blood," she conceded. "But—here I live in comfort at a big hotel; I write fiction for my living, a work I love—my own work——"

"You could do that at home in Royalmont."

Marge's dark eyes opened wide.

"Could I?" This was an astonishing concession, for Julian. But it necessitated a change of front immediately; for she hoped she would never have to write another story for *Heart Confessions* and she would never dare to do it back home. Julian would want to know all about it, if they were married.

"No," she said, "I couldn't. If I married a man in your position, it would be enough of a job just to be your wife. I'd have to give up my art——"

"I'd rather you would," he admitted, with a frankness which she liked. "You don't have to if you don't want to, but I'd rather you would. I—I—Marge, I don't know what's happened to me. You—I wanted to marry you, when you were home for Christmas, but I didn't know how I was going to miss you—— I think about you all the time——"

HIS sincerity was unmistakable and Marge liked that, too.

"If I've hesitated," she said, "it was only because I wasn't sure I cared for you enough. You deserve somebody who's crazy about you, Julian."

"So far as that goes, I don't know that I'd want a woman to feel the way about me that I feel about you. It—— Oh, what of it? You understand the proposition, Marge."

"I know, Julian. It's awfully sweet of you and I'm stupid to be unable to make up my mind. I want to, but—I'd have to give certain things up——"

"Well, so far as that goes, I'd have to overlook a good deal."

"What?" Marge asked.

He gestured with his cigar at the crowd around them.

"I don't think this is any sort of life for a girl like you to lead, Marge. All this glitter and dissipation and extravagance——"

"Extravagance?"

"You wear a lot of jewelry, for a girl in your position."

She couldn't help flushing and he couldn't help wondering what the flush meant.

"One wants to look well," she said lightly. Yet she was toying with an awful temptation—to confess that she was broke, that she could live in the Minaret only for the week he was here, that all her jewelry was borrowed from friends who were willing to let the insurance companies take the risk that she might meet the bobbed-haired bandit—tell him everything and start clean.

"I don't like it," he repeated. "It—it arouses suspicion, in an unattached woman of your position. It doesn't look well. Oh, I know it's all right—Eddie told me it was all right for an unmarried girl to live at the Minaret and——"

"Eddie told you!" she gasped. "You—you didn't——"

Julian perceived that he must retrieve his error.

"Of course I didn't discuss you with Eddie," he said loftily—and safely. He was confident, for Marge and Eddie were evidently only casual acquaintances. "But he told me something of the way you live and said it was quite a usual and safe manner in New York——"

"Oh, he did?" Eddie would always help anybody keep up a front, bless him, Marge thought.

"I don't like it," Julian admitted candidly. "You—you aren't the type of woman, exactly, that I'd meant to marry. But after we'd gone around together when you were home at Christmas, I wanted you, not some type of woman——"

"Thank you, Julian," she said, with swift compunction. After all, Julian couldn't help the way he was made. "That's rather sweet of you."

"Then you will marry me?"

Marge drew her breath and took the plunge.

"I guess so."

His hand came across the table and rested on hers. She had let him kiss her at Christmas time, but somehow the caress annoyed her now. She could get used to it, in time, perhaps.

"I guess so," she repeated. "But let's talk it over to-morrow. I'm tired. I think I'd better go down to my room and go to sleep."

Julian obviously regretted that some champagne must be left unused, but with Marge's consent so recent he couldn't afford to offend her. So presently they were waiting for the elevator.

"I'll go down with you to the lobby," she offered.

"Do I have to tell you good-by in the lobby?"

"Where else?" she asked. "You can't very well get off at my floor—all the elevator men know me."

"This hotel life is all wrong!" he exploded, and she smiled.

"Poor Julian! Never mind. You're going to have lots of chances to tell me good-by."

This mollified him, in some degree, as the elevator took them down.

"Oh, by the way," he told her, "Eddie wants us to dine with him to-morrow night. Here at the Minaret. We dress, of course—Eddie said he wanted to make it a loud and splashy party."

"Eddie!" Marge gasped, feeling suddenly dizzy. How could Eddie organize a loud and splashy party? And why should he have asked her with Julian?

"Eddie? Us? Why should he invite us out together?"

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Julian, wondering if he could have been misled by the fact that the pronoun "you" is singular as well as plural. But it was never Julian's habit to admit that he had been, or could be, misled.

"Why shouldn't he?" he repeated. "I suppose he must have seen that I was unusually interested in you and, if he's seen you since Christmas, perhaps he may have observed——"

Marge's lips parted for a hot retort, but she snapped them shut on the words. She had let herself in for it. She knew Julian and she had said she would marry him. After this, she would have to line up on his side, prepare to ignore his little ways, even defend them.

DESPITE the warmth of the fur coat, she shivered as they came into the lobby and she held out her hand.

"Good night, Julian."

Reluctantly he accepted the situation.

"Good night, my dear——" His voice changed. "Marge, I told you a big Broadway hotel wasn't safe."

"What's the matter?"

"A man is staring at you—over there by the desk. I suppose the moment I leave you he may become offensive."

She laughed.

"That? That's only the hotel detective. He's staring at me, I suppose, because any girl who comes into a hotel nowadays with black bobbed hair and a squirrel coat is suspected of being the bobbed-haired bandit. That seems to be the uniform of banditry."

"Marge, you take everything so lightly——"

"I'll never take things heavily," she warned him. "Make up your mind to that before it's too late."

She didn't realize the nature of the answer she was waiting for till he gave the wrong one.

"All right," he conceded. "I'm content if you take me at all. You'll come down to our opening to-morrow, won't you? And then in the evening we dine with Eddie. Poor Eddie! He means well. If he weren't so unstable—— Er—Marge! Has he ever paid you any particular attention?"

"Attention?" She frowned. "I've gone around with him a little, if that's what you mean. Why?"

"Why," said Julian, "I only thought if he ever had any—er—interest in you, in his way, it was rather fine of him to take us out together. The boy has good impulses, if one only knew how to bring them out."

"I don't know that it's so fine of him," said Marge, representing her feeling with some difficulty.

"Why not?"

"Oh——" She turned off the question. "Probably he's like you—a believer in keeping up old associations."

She saw him out through the revolving doors, then turned back to the elevator. She knew why Eddie had done it. He'd taken up that indiscreet remark of hers about being asked to meet Julian's fiancée, had taken her to her word and decided to show her how little he cared. He might have known that she said that only in the heat of anger, that she didn't mean it.

It was too late now to say she didn't mean it. Eddie was going to rub it in. Well, she'd show him!

It was a curious coincidence that Marge, too, lay awake for hours that night and that her thoughts also ran to those seven occasions on which Eddie had asked her to marry him.

CHAPTER XII.

TO WATCH HIM SIZZLE.

THE next day there was work—work for Julian, who had to open his New York office; work for Marge, who had to play hostess and smile and talk and listen laboriously, to the gentlemen whom Julian introduced to her, to smile and talk and listen and wonder why she couldn't get up more enthusiasm over Julian's satisfaction. Marge was beginning to realize that if she married Julian she would have to work for her living. That was all right. She was

used to working for her living. Only, she wished she might get a little fun out of it.

Eddie was not at the opening. Eddie was at home, banging away at his typewriter, working frantically on the third act of his play. He never stopped to wonder why the play had suddenly recaptured his whole interest that day; he only knew that when he woke up in the morning one of the tangles in the third act had straightened itself out. Now to finish it—finish it as soon as he could. Certain personal connections in two producing offices would insure him at least two readings by men who counted. Then a thousand-dollar advance; and then, ultimately, production and a thousand dollars a week.

Not till nightfall did Eddie come back to reality, to lean back limply in his chair and stare at the manuscript and perceive that there was still a good deal of work to be done before he could hope for a reading and an advance. Weeks of work—perhaps a month. Meanwhile, to-night was the night—the night when he must entertain Julian and Marge, when he must eat the bread of infamy and earn the wage of shame by working as a stool pigeon for John P. Carlton.

Well, he couldn't help it! Perhaps nobody could help anything. Doubtless the bobbed-haired bandit couldn't help it; Eddie was beginning to understand that even normally respectable people may do anything, if they are in sufficient need of money. Perhaps even Julian couldn't help it.

Eddie opened his closet door and took out his evening clothes and, as he swept the coat tails clear of the other garments, his eye lit on something that he had thrust out of the way in the closet night before last and hadn't thought of since—the battered portrait of Mrs. McCune. Yesterday he had been too much worried about ways and means of financing a party for Julian to think about it at all; to-day he had been trying to find an escape, in work, from the remembrance of the way he had finally raised the money. Yet here it was and he ought to give it back; the poor woman was probably lonesome for it, as if she had lost a pet cat or parrot.

Eddie looked at his watch. Six o'clock, and he was to meet the lady who was to be the third member of his party at the Biltmore in three quarters of an hour. Meanwhile, he must bathe and shave and dress. Still he might make it, with an effort, and he did get so far as to call up the rooming house to notify Mrs. McCune that he was coming over.

But his call was transferred to a lady who asked him, "What number did you call, please?" graciously admitted that there was such a number and asked the operator to try it. The operator obligingly promised and then, for all Eddie could find out to the contrary, fell dead at the switchboard. He gave it up, bathed, shaved and tried again. The line was busy.

Eddie sighed. It might or it might not be busy, but he had no comeback. When they gave you a "Don't answer," or told you that a number which you knew was still in use had been temporarily discontinued, you could argue the point, take it higher up and perhaps eventually get some action; but when they merely gave you the automatically recurrent pump-pump-pump that meant busy, there was nothing you could do about it. Besides, time was passing and the party mustn't be delayed. Mrs. McCune had waited two days for her treasure; she could wait one day more.

Fifteen minutes later Eddie sat under the clock at the Biltrox, in full splendor of silk hat and swallow-tailed coat—he suspected that Julian had a special degree of respect for the possessors of silk hats—waiting for his

other guest. He was ten minutes late for his appointment, but the lady was later still. No wonder—from her telephone number Eddie surmised that she lived somewhere off Central Park West; he couldn't imagine why she had insisted on meeting him at a place so far out of the way as the Biltrox.

At any rate, this benched alcove was a good place to wait. Under the clock at the Biltrox, you often saw people you knew and always people you wished you knew. Eddie was glancing at the people he wished he knew, observing with some amusement that perhaps one woman out of four stared away as if she was looking for the hotel detective, while the others dropped their eyes demurely only to look up a moment later in the hope that he was still glancing, when a shadow fell on him and he stared up into the magnetic eyes of Mr. Ingoldsby Franklyn.

MR. FRANKLYN was a public-relations counsel—indeed, he was rather *the* public-relations counsel. In their profession, he was as far ahead of Eddie as Walter Johnson is ahead of a semipro pitcher in the sticks. But Eddie knew him fairly well, Mr. Franklyn finding it necessary to keep up his lofty front only among the people whose names he got into the papers or kept out of the papers—and not among old associations.

"Hello, Eddie!" he said genially. "Working?"

Eddie waved a hand at the silk hat on the bench beside him.

"Who do you think I am? John Drew?"

"I mean, are you working in the daytime?"

"Yes, I'm writing a play."

"They all do it!" Franklyn sighed. "Too bad. I've just taken on the campaign for a five-million-dollar endowment for Teignmouth Theologica Seminary and I find that I've got to expand the organization to handle it. My bright young men have already got about as much work as they can carry. I was hoping I could get you to take charge of this particular drive for me. It's only a three-month job, but it pays a hundred a week——"

Eddie regarded him sullenly.

"Day before yesterday I'd have sold my soul for a hundred a week, but it's too late now. The property has been disposed of already and for a damn sight less."

"You wouldn't have to sell your soul for this job," said Franklyn. "Some of these old fellows are pretty narrow and you might have to hide the fact that you used to live at the Minaret. They've got an awful horror of the bright lights. But that's all. You could do this job, Eddie. If somebody's given you an advance on your play, I could——"

"Nobody has. It's—— Oh, what's the difference?"

"The difference," said Ingoldsby Franklyn, "is a hundred a week. You'd have to put off the play, for this job would keep you busy of evenings addressing men's Bible classes and parish clubs and so on. But you——"

"I don't need money," said Eddie. "Not now."

"Don't need money?" Franklyn studied the silk hat, the smart evening clothes, with new respect. Certainly Eddie looked like a young man who didn't need money—and to him that hath shall be given.

"Look here, Eddie," said Franklyn. "Make it a hundred and fifty—— Well, if that doesn't tempt you say a hundred and seventy-five——"

"Have you got it with you?" Eddie asked. "The first week's pay?" For he had a wild perception that it was not yet too late to throw a party on his own money, return Carlton's hundred in the morning and save his soul.

"Of course I haven't got it with me!"

said Franklyn, with dignity. "I rarely carry much more than taxi hire. I can sign checks wherever I go."

"And there," said Eddie, "you workers for the good cause make an awful mistake. The devil has always got it with him and now and then he manages to pick up a perfectly good soul at fire-sale prices just because he can pay cash. Get somebody else to raise the theological millions. So long, Franklyn."

He rose hastily, for his guest was approaching. Curious—Eddie's eyes had been fixed on the revolving door at the foot of the steps, yet he hadn't seen her enter. She must have come from one of the elevators—yet she didn't live at the Biltrox.

HOWEVER, here she was, her open mink coat revealing white shoulders and a blue evening gown and a sapphire pendant, incredibly blue and incredibly large. Eddie's smile was spontaneous; she was beautiful, even if her golden hair did approach a little too closely the hue of a gilt steam radiator.

"Well," she said cheerfully. "Sorry I'm late."

"That's all right. We'll make Julian wait for us. I told him I'd meet him in the Minaret lounge at seven and I know he's always punctual. Let him wait. Nothing like putting him in his place."

"Put Baldy in his place? Say, who do you think you are—the supreme court? I know that old Stone Mountain better than you do. And he doesn't know I'm coming, eh?"

"No, I thought I'd let him be surprised."

She tittered as they came out on the sidewalk and the doorman brought up a taxi.

"Surprised? Yes, I think I may say he will certainly be surprised. Nobody else in the party, is there?"

"Just we three," said Eddie.

"Ah! Then you're going to have a pleasant evening and I'm going to have a pleasant evening and Baldy is going to have one hell of an evening. Oh, don't be afraid! I'm not going to pull anything rough. We'll just watch him sizzle."

"I've been waiting to watch him sizzle," said Eddie, "for twenty-eight years."

"Baldy's not so bad," she said thoughtfully. "He tried to get friendly with me, but it wasn't hard to shut him off. I've met worse, before and since. Nothing much against him but his manner."

"What else do you need?" he demanded. "Look here, young woman, what was the idea of dragging me, and yourself, all the way over here to get together, when you live on the West Side?"

"Oh, I wanted to get out from under Hymie's feet. Every time I go out with anybody else he starts an offensive."

"What's Hymie got to say about it? Is he—I don't suppose he's your husband."

"No, I had that much sense," she admitted frankly. "He's only my partner. We've got a clean wholesome comedy act that usually goes over big——"

"Where's it playing now? I'd like to see it."

"Not playing at present," she admitted. "But you'll hear of it. Ah! Here we are. And now for Baldy."

EDDIE paid the taxi driver, stuffed his sizable roll in his pocket and strode into the hotel behind her. Through the lobby, up the little flight of steps that led to the lounge on the mezzanine, his eyes roved, then found, close at hand, what they were seeking—and a good deal more than they were seeking.

Julian was starting up from a couch, with horror in his face. Marge started up beside him; Marge with a jade evening gown visible beneath her open squirrel coat, jade drops hanging from her ears. And though Eddie didn't know it, his face was as horrified as Julian's. What had been only a joke, if Julian came alone to dine with him and Marie, was a perfectly atrocious outrage, if Julian's fiancée joined the party.

Julian's face must have betrayed him to Marge, if she had looked at him, but she was too busy looking at Eddie. Of the four, only Marie was unconcerned, amused.

"How d'you do, Mr. Reeve?" she said, with entire composure, offering Julian her hand. "So glad to see you again."

Julian choked and stammered and glared at Eddie with murder in his eye. But Eddie was trying frantically to save the situation.

"Oh, Marge, did you ever know Miss Selver, when she lived in Royalmont about——"

"Née Mrs. Paul Pardee," said Marie cheerfully. "I knew you by sight, but I don't think we ever met."

Marge responded politely, then turned to Eddie.

"Julian insisted that you'd invited me, too, for this evening. I thought perhaps there was some misunderstanding about it, but——"

It was Eddie's turn to choke and stammer. But the one thing unthinkable was to tell Marge that he had meant to leave her out of any party he might ever give. No that would never do!

"Of course I invited you!"

"Oh, I supposed so," she told him, "when I saw it was a party of four. Nice of you to bring along somebody from back home."

"Yes," he said hoarsely, "I'm like Julian. I believe in keeping up old associations. Shall we go up to the roof? I've reserved a table."

As they turned toward the elevator Marie drifted to his side—the other two were a little in advance—and whispered:

"This the girl he's going to marry?"

Eddie nodded miserably.

"Then what kind of a deal are you trying to rig up, anyway? I don't think I like this idea very much."

"You like it a lot better than I do, at that," he told her. "But—— Oh, it was all a mistake. Some awful boner of Julian's——"

"Oh! So you didn't mean to ask her?"

"Certainly not. It was to be just us three—to watch Julian sizzle——"

"Look at him," said Marie. "Cool as a biscuit tortoni. You're the one that's sizzling. If anybody ever looked fried in his own fat, it's you, old schemer. Baldy's perfectly happy; except that he thinks you dragged me along to get him in dutch with his girl. And if I know Baldy, he won't forget that."

"I know it!" he groaned. "I might have known he could pull through anything with his luck and his front. He always wins."

"Cheer up!" Marie told him. "All we need now is a little visit from Hymie, crazy with the driven snow, to make this a really exciting evening. So be yourself, boy. I know you want to jump off the fire escape, but I left all my jack at home and no gentleman would jump off the fire escape and leave a lady to walk home from Times Square to Sixty-sixth Street. String along to the elevator, now, before our friends begin to wonder what the long aside's about. This is your party and we've got to feed it enough to keep it from passing out by the roadside, anyway." She smiled pleasantly. "Well, Miss Lanneaux, nothing like this in Royalmont, is there?"

CHAPTER XIII.

A QUICK WORKER.

THE Minaret roof was a soft-lit, glass-walled palace fifteen stories above Broadway, warm as a boudoir though the February winds howled against the expanse of windows. Eddie had obtained the best, the undeniably and absolutely best, table in the house, close to the dancing floor yet out of reach of wild-swinging dancers, with a view over the electric signs and water tanks and the rest of the sky line of the mid-town district. And the head waiter greeted him with the deference due a well-known and prosperous patron, rather than the comradeship that might be displayed—and was, outside of office hours—to one who till lately had been a fellow employee of Justin Amidon.

Justin Amidon! The name recalled to Eddie the ignoble business that brought him here, that enabled him to finance the party. He must keep faith with Carlton, but he couldn't help believing that destiny, which had smitten him with so many and grievous wallops, would take care of him at last, wouldn't let him become a stool pigeon. Perhaps they would refuse to sell drinks to his party—but he knew that hope was vain.

They were already ordering dinner.

"Something to drink?" Eddie suggested, trying to sound discouraging. His heart leaped when he saw that Marie, absorbed in the menu, hadn't heard him. If the others didn't take anything, Marie would submit to the remembered standards of Royalmont and conceal her thirst.

"Well, I want some champagne," said Marge rather sharply. "It's good here and I need it to-night."

"Very well," said Eddie, with obvious lack of enthusiasm.

Julian cut in with a discreet——

"Marge!"

She looked at him; he shook his head.

"Perhaps Eddie doesn't——" began Julian. "Perhaps we'd better not——"

Black fury surged up in Eddie's soul. So Julian didn't think he had the price!

"A couple of quarts of Moet & Chandon," he told the waiter. "Cocktails? No? All right, then—hurry up the wine."

The Rubicon was crossed. No turning back now.

At any rate, the prospect of wine cheered up the party. Marie turned cheerfully to Julian.

"Well, Jule, how's the carpet business? Still going big?"

Eddie sensed the gasp of horror that Marge suppressed unheard: "Jule! Whatever——"

"Very well, thanks." Julian was imperturbable. "We just opened our New York office this afternoon. Rather a formal occasion——"

He was proceeding to tell her about it when she rose.

"Let's dance," she suggested, "while we're waiting for the food."

He got up with alacrity; it wasn't hard to guess that Marie wanted to conclude an armistice and Julian was for peace at any price. Eddie looked sullenly at Marge.

"Like to dance?"

She shook her head and he couldn't know that she had refused only because she couldn't stand it, just now, to feel Eddie's arm around her—even the impersonal arm of a dancing partner.

EDDIE," she said, her voice low and tense. "What's happened?"

"Happened? Huh! Julian's opened his New York office and you're engaged to him and I see they had a big fire in Tokyo yesterday. Nothing else, unless you count what's doing in Congress——"

"Don't be silly! What's happened to you?"

"Me?" He regarded her bitterly. "Nothing at all. I'm used to seeing Julian get what he wants, even if I wanted it, too. That's an old story."

"You know what I mean. How can you throw a party like this? Where did you get it?"

"Oh, I've come into funds——"

"An advance on your play?" she asked eagerly. "I'm so glad——"

"No, not that. I—I just got a little money——"

"And you're spending it all on this party," she whispered. Her hand slid across the table, but, just before it touched his, she remembered and drew it back with a shiver. How long would it be, before she remembered automatically? "Every nickel, I'll bet, on this party. Oh, you poor crazy nut!"

"What do I need with money? I turned down a job just this evening—a hundred and seventy-five a week for——"

"You did? Why, you—— What kind of job was it?"

"Oh, a good job—making speeches to men's Bible classes and parish clubs—publicity for a religious-endowment drive."

"Why didn't you take it?"

"What could I do with money?" he asked, with a shrug.

Marge was silent; Eddie glanced at her sharply.

"I see you've come into funds, too, Marge."

"If you mean that I'm engaged to Julian——"

"I mean that he seems to have made a deposit to bind the bargain."

"Just what does that mean?" she demanded.

"Well, a diamond pendant—a bracelet—a whole handful of dinner rings—a cigarette case striped in gold and platinum. All this, I suppose, to keep you decorated while the engagement ring is being suitably engraved. I never thought Julian would blow himself like that in the first twenty-four hours. You work quick, Marge."

"Do you know why I don't hit you in the face," she asked, "and with the hand that wears all the rings, at that? Because I don't want to spoil Julian's evening. He didn't give me these things."

"He didn't? Then who did? Anybody who was as far sunk as you were, day before yesterday——"

Her eyes held his with cold anger.

"It's none of your business, Eddie. Nothing that I do is any of your business, now and forevermore."

He might have answered her, but at that moment Julian and Marie came back to the table, also a waiter with the soup.

"How about the champagne?" Marie inquired. "I'm perishing in the hot sand of the desert."

"In a moment, madame." The waiter nodded toward the door.

They all looked toward the door and kept on looking. The head waiter was staring at their table. So was a portly pink-faced man beside him, whom they all knew as the hotel detective. So, too, were two other men in plain clothes—business clothes, in a dining room which admitted no one without evening dress.

"Good night!" said Marie softly. "The place is pulled."

"What?" Eddie started up with the incredulous joy of a convict whose reprieve arrives just as he has been strapped in the chair. If the police arrested a Minaret waiter for selling champagne, no more champagne would be seen on the premises that night. Eddie would have kept faith with Carlton without actually becoming a stool pigeon; Julian couldn't blame Eddie for failing to get champagne. And to-morrow the waiter would be discharged for lack of evidence; the police would have

proved their zeal; Justin Amidon's hotel would have proved its purity; and everybody would be happy.

"God bless the thick heads of our gendarmerie," he reflected comfortably, and then the house detective detached himself from the group and came toward Eddie's table.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEIR MIDDLE NAMES.

THERE was something ominous about the detective's approach; Eddie felt it and so did his guests. Marie drummed nervously on the table; Marge hid her uneasiness by ostentatiously retouching her lips; Julian's shirt front heaved itself up into a defiant convex. The house detective came up, on catlike feet, and looked at Marge.

"Miss Vivien Vaile?" he asked, and she turned crimson.

"Certainly not," she snapped, rather too sharply.

"Miss Margery Lanneaux, then?"

"Yes."

"There's a message for you at the door, Miss Lanneaux, if you'll just step——"

"Have it brought to the table. Why should I go to the door?"

"Perhaps you'd find it more convenient," said the house detective smoothly. "There seems to have been some little misunderstanding——"

"Now look here, Schrenkeisen!" said Eddie. "What's all the mystery about? And what have those two flatfeet got to do with it?"

"Yes, indeed," said Julian. "Who is Vivien Vaile and why should Miss Lanneaux be annoyed by questions about her?"'

Marge got up hastily.

"Oh, it's only some silly mix-up, Julian. I'll go to the door and see what they want. Excuse me, all of you!"

Eddie got up hastily.

"I'll go along with you," he said. "I know how to talk to these birds."

"Eddie! You'll stay right here."

"Certainly," said Julian, rising. "It's my place to go with her. We'll straighten this out."

"No, no, Julian! This is nothing—I'll get it all cleared up—— You stay here, too."

"Not at all," said Julian, with the decisive snap of the executive whose orders are always obeyed. "I don't propose to let you be insulted by house detectives. If there's a mystery, I'll clear it up."

"Julian! Please! Really, it isn't necessary——"

He stared at her with a slow flush.

"On the contrary," he observed, "I begin to think it is."

"Well, I'll come, too," said Eddie. "I know the tortuous windings of the police mind——"

"And I certainly don't intend to be left behind here all alone," said Marie Selver. "If two quarts of champagne arrived before you did, I'd be tempted beyond my strength. Let's all go—then it won't look so much like a collar."

Marge glared furiously at them all. "I don't need you—— I——" With a shrug she gave it up and the whole party started for the door.

Once, Marge's eyes came back and caught Eddie's in silent appeal. He was pretty sure she wanted him to get Julian out of the way. But there was no getting rid of Julian now. Julian wanted to know.

The episode looked enough like a collar, for all their precautions. Many diners on the Minaret roof knew the house detective and there couldn't be much doubt about the profession of the two plain-clothes men at the door. All over the dining room, men and women turned and stared; under their glances, Julian turned red and Eddie turned red and even Marie.

ONLY Marge was calm, as calm as a French duchess of the kingdom on her way to the guillotine, as they came up to the open space between the tables and the elevators, where the two detectives and the head waiter were bent over something that looked like a photograph. Behind them, technically out of sight, two waiters had hesitated, with champagne bottles and buckets of ice. Eddie wished he had some of that champagne now.

Marge turned as they came up to the detectives.

"Please go back!" she begged them. "This is—this is——"

"This is my business," said Julian, "if it's your business."

Then Detective Sergeant Sheehan, whom Eddie had known for years. looked up from the photograph.

"Yes," he said softly, "it's the same one."

"Same what?" said Julian.

Sheehan held up a big photograph of Marge, torn across the middle. Marge gasped and so did Eddie.

"You recognize this, Miss Lanneaux?"

"Of course!"

"Where did you last see it?"

"In a wastebasket, where I'd thrown it away."

Eddie grunted softly.

"And this wastebasket was in a rooming house on West Forty-ninth Street, kept by Mrs. Helena McCune?" Sheehan asked.

"What business is it of yours what I do with my own photographs?"

"And you lived in this house under the name of Vivien Vaile——"

"I did not," she insisted, but her voice was strained.

Eddie turned on Julian.

"Go back to the table, Julian, and leave me to handle these birds."

"I will not. I'll get this straightened out. What do you mean by these insulting questions, officer? This lady is Miss Lanneaux. She lives here at the Minaret."

"Since night before last," said Schrenkeisen, the hotel detective.

"Night before last?" said Julian. "The night before I came to New York? Where did you live before that, Marge?"

"Pankhurst House," she said defiantly.

"There!" said Julian. "You see now——"

"I see she can come up to the house and tell the rest of it to Inspector McGuire," said Sheehan. "For she certainly lived on West Forty-ninth Street till night before last and about the time she left there, twelve thousand dollars of Mrs. McCune's left, too."

"Preposterous!" Julian snorted. But he didn't seem so firm as he had been at the table.

"Preposterous is the word," Eddie agreed. "Twelve grand? Marge never had that much in her life."

"Maybe not," said Schrenkeisen dryly. "But if she got that diamond pendant for less than five grand, I'd like to know where they're givin' things away."

Julian's burning eyes came back to the diamond pendant; then he rallied and began hotly:

"You can't arrest a girl of perfectly unblemished character——"

"She ain't under arrest," Sheehan explained patiently. "She's only asked to come up and explain what happened when she left Mrs. McCune's."

"But these insolent suspicions——"

"Now, now!" said Sheehan. "We're not saying she can't explain everything. But she says she lived in Pankhurst House last week and we know she lived on West Forty-ninth Street and used an alias, too. We just want to find out——"

"And while you're at it," Schrenkeisen added, "you might ask her why a woman named Vaile, or Lanneaux,

carries a cigarette case with the monogram ESK. Oh, yes, it's in your hand bag now, but I saw it at the table. We've got orders to keep an eye on every girl with black bobbed hair and a gray-squirrel coat."

"Why, you incomparable bonehead, it——" Eddie began hotly, when Marge broke in with a sharp, staccato query, implying indignation:

"What business is it of yours, Eddie? Or of Julian's, either? This is just some silly case of mistaken identity. I —I've heard of Vivien Vaile—I'll just go up and see the inspector and straighten out this blunder. The rest of you go right on with your dinner. I'll be with you again before you've got down to coffee. Come along, officers."

"I think I'd better go with you," Eddie insisted. "I know McGuire——"

"Stay here!" she commanded.

"It's my place to go with her," said Julian.

"I don't need anybody!" Marge flared. "I can get this cleared up!"

"You don't want me to go with you, eh?" said Julian softly.

"It isn't necessary——"

"Marge! Did you ever live at a Times Square rooming house?" Julian asked.

She hesitated; her glance crossed Eddie's; then the ruling passion conquered.

"I never did. This is all a case of—of mistaken identity. Go back to your table——"

"How did your photograph get there?" Julian demanded.

"Well, are you Inspector McGuire, to ask me all these questions? Come—I'm ready to go."

"It's all right, Julian," said Eddie soothingly. "They've just mixed her up with this Miss Vaile, whoever she is. I'll go along and talk to McGuire and——"

"You will—like hell!" said Sheehan. "Since when do you help question suspects?"

"I'm a friend of this lady——"

"You wait till you're invited. Here's the elevator, Miss Vaile."

Eddie squirmed. McGuire wouldn't be actually cruel, in examining a woman prisoner, but he might get Marge entangled in all sorts of complications. It wouldn't do to let her face that ordeal alone. Anything to be with her—anything——

"You'll let me go," he announced. "I'm attached to the district attorney's office."

"You—what?" said Schrenkeisen.

"The hell you say!" growled Valerien, the head waiter. At a wave of his hand, the champagne bottles disappeared.

"Tell that to the inspector," said Sheehan, as he followed Marge into the elevator and the door rolled shut in Eddie's face.

EDDIE looked around him—at Julian, grim and suspicious; at Marie, startled and enigmatic; at Schrenkeisen and the head waiter, glaring at him in suppressed fury. Once more, as usual, he had done the worst thing possible—and it hadn't helped Marge.

"Well, Julian," he said nervously, "you and Marie go on and finish dinner and I'll run along and help Marge out. We'll be back——"

"Jule can wait," said Marie, "but I'm off for the great open spaces. This party is jinxed. I had a date with Hymie at nine thirty, anyway."

"Better stay and keep Julian company."

"I'll keep you company," Julian announced, "if you're going to follow Marge. There's some mystery about this and she can't fool me. Neither can you. I propose to get to the bottom of all this——"

"Julian, you know she never stole anything."

"I don't suppose she did. But I believe she's been living in that rooming house, for all her denials—under an assumed name—— Do *you* know?"

Eddie had a feeling that it would save trouble to tell the truth, but this was Marge's secret and not for him to betray.

"All I know," he said serenely, "was that she used to live at Pankhurst House and now she lives at the Minaret."

"Aggh!" Julian growled. "I'm going to the police station. You needn't come with me; this is none of your business."

"I'll just trail along," said Eddie. "Now, now, don't try to keep me away. Anybody can walk into the front room of a police station, but you'll need my help to get into the back room when they're questioning a suspect."

THEIR taxi made slow progress through the complex traffic system of the theater district and the detectives who had started five minutes ahead of them arrived ten minutes before they did. When Eddie led Julian through the front room of the police station, he noticed with uneasiness that it was already rather unusually crowded. He recognized three or four reporters whom he knew; and one of them, a district man of the *Morning Dispatch,* laid hold of him with an eager——

"Have they got the bobbed-haired bandit?"

"Hell, no! This is some boner of Sheehan's. What makes you——"

"Well—squirrel coat, bobbed black hair, a charge of grand larceny—and I hear there's something queer about her jewels——"

"Shut up!" Eddie hissed, but it was too late.

Julian had heard.

"Yes, indeed," he observed icily. "There is something queer about her jewels."

"Hamar's covering the rooming-house end," said the reporter. "He's got Mrs. McCune off somewhere tellin' him all she knows——"

"He'd better let her tell the inspector in time to escape a suit for false arrest," said Eddie. "Come on, Julian."

At the inner door a patrolman halted them.

"District attorney's office," said Eddie, and pushed past him.

"All right, all right," the patrolman's voice rang behind him. "I hear Carlton's been sent for himself. Looks like a big collar——"

Eddie and Julian burst into the back room where Inspector McGuire, a cigar in his mouth, sat behind a flat-topped desk. Sheehan and three or four other detectives stood about him. Marge sat in a hard straight chair, her fur coat open, her knees crossed, her face white but defiant.

"Hello, Eddie!" said the inspector. "How did you bust in?"

"I'm a friend of Miss Lanneaux. Just come to help you out before you get in too deep."

"You're in rather too deeply already," said Julian. "I am Mr. Julian Reeve, of Royalmont. You will find that I am rather well acquainted with men who count in New York. I know Miss Lanneaux well and I know she never did——"

"You live in Royalmont?" the inspector interrupted. "Then, Mr. Reeve, what do you know about how your friends are living in New York? You know just what they tell you. So long as they keep up their front, you never know what's behind it. There's a lot of freedom in this town, Mr. Reeve—more than you people from the interior realize."

"I understand that there's entirely too much," said Julian sullenly.

"Maybe and maybe not; the point is that you never know, even if you live here, just what your friends are doing. If a man or woman's tied down to a family, you know where they are part

of the time; but what does anybody know about a bachelor, or a bachelor girl? You see your friends once a week. You know their names and where they live—but how do you know they haven't got another residence and another name, too? You see a man teaching Sunday-school. For all you know he's going out that night to hijack a truckload of whisky. You see a woman editing a magazine. How do you know but she's out tearing up Broadway at night, under an alias? You don't know it, even if you live around the corner. You certainly don't know it, if you live in Royalmont."

"But Miss Lanneaux wouldn't——"

"Oh, understand, Mr. Reeve, she isn't under arrest. The woman who brought this larceny charge will be here pretty soon and maybe Miss Lanneaux can clear it up. But the maid of the rooming house has identified her as the woman who lived at the place on West Forty-ninth Street and used the name of Vaile, the woman who had a caller the day she left and told him she hadn't thought anybody could find her there, the woman who told Mrs. McCune when she left that nobody would ever know she'd been there at all. She's charged with larceny. We know she wears jewels that she didn't have when she lived at the rooming house and her rings and bracelets bear names and initials that she never used, so——"

"Marge!" said Julian. "I've got to know the truth."

"Now what do you want to waste time for?" Eddie protested. "You'd better hustle out and get her a lawyer while I stay here and help her answer questions."

"I won't hustle out," said Julian, "and I won't be hustled out. Enough of that has been done to me already—or at least you've tried to do it. You can't hustle me out. Marge, why you use an alias? Where did you get those jewels? Answer me!"

"I never stole anything in my life," said Marge. "You know that."

"On the contrary," said Julian, "I'm not at all sure of it. What does all this mean?"

"If I tell you it's all right, won't you believe me?"

"I—— You've got to tell me everything! Why did you——"

Marge's black eyebrows arched saucily, her black eyes snapped.

"I'll never tell you."

"Aggh!" said Julian. "If you won't trust me——"

"It looks as if you won't trust me," cut in Marge.

"Inspector," said Julian, "I've wanted to help this girl because I am—er—an old friend of the family——"

"That and nothing more," said Marge firmly.

"That and nothing more," Julian agreed.

"Now, look here!" Eddie interposed. "Don't go crazy, Julian——"

"Eddie! Do you know where she got those jewels?"

"No. What of it? I know she didn't steal them."

"I borrowed them," said Marge wearily. "I told the inspector that, Julian, before you came in. He'd have told you, if you hadn't been in such a hurry."

"She says she borrowed them," said the inspector. "We're trying to check up on that story. It's unfortunate that the women she says she borrowed them from all seem to be in Atlantic City, or out at the theater. So, Mr. Reeve, you can see that we had some reason for sending for some of the people who have been held up by the bobbed-haired bandit, to see if they identify Miss Lanneaux. And I believe they're here now."

The door opened to admit the district attorney.

"Hello, inspector! Heard you had a bobbed-haired bandit suspect——"

"They've sunk their foot in it, John," Eddie was beginning, when Sheehan cut in with:

"Mr. Carlton, this bird says he's from your office. That so?"

"Where does he say he's from, my office?"

"Up on the Minaret roof, when we made the collar."

The district attorney looked at Eddie and his glance would have frozen a leaping flame in mid-air.

"Him from my office? Do you think I'd have that light-headed amplifier, that sieve of information, on my staff, as an assistant, or a detective, or a process server, or even to sweep out? Him? Why, he's only a busted press agent, broke and out of a job! He came to me last night and said he had to have some money to throw a party and I let him have it——"

Anger choked him into silence and then the silence was broken by a ripple of laughter that grew until Marge was laughing hysterically, rocking with mirth in her chair.

"Oh, Eddie! Now we all know each other's middle names!"

"All but one," said Eddie.

For Julian was tiptoeing toward the door.

CHAPTER XV.

ALL TALKING AT ONCE.

EDDIE followed and caught Julian in the doorway, as the district attorney settled down to a new questioning of Marge.

"Wait a minute, Julian," said Eddie grimly. "This charge is crazy, but with all that circumstantial evidence they're likely to hold her—and you know what that means. There's no women's night court any more; Marge will have to spend the night in a cell. She'll need a lawyer, and a good lawyer, to break through this net of things that look bad. A good lawyer. Marge is broke and so am I; you'll have to hire him. Give me what money you've got with you. Better give me a blank check, too, in case the man I've got in mind displays his usual eagerness for a big retainer before he starts."

"Give you money? Why should I?"

"Why, you and Marge are engaged and——"

"I thought you perceived that the engagement had just been broken, by mutual consent."

"Oh, that was only a lovers' quarrel," said Eddie. "Marge was sore at you, but she'll be all cooled off to-morrow."

"I'm cooled off now. I can't believe she's guilty of larceny—or banditry, for that matter. But I'm through with her. She's lied to me."

"Well, didn't you ever lie to anybody?"

"Never in all my life!" said Julian.

"Anyway, you know her and know she's all right——"

"I know nothing of the sort. What does anybody know about what their friends are doing in New York? I know she's been infected by this life of the Great White Way; I know she's reckless and extravagant—and I know she's been living in an obscure rooming house under an assumed name. Why did she do that? Do you know?"

"No, but——"

"Where did she get those jewels? Borrowed them? Who believes that? Where did she get the money to live at the Minaret? I couldn't get her to tell me what magazines her stories appeared in. She's been deceiving me, I tell you—me! She's been leading a double life and I won't excuse that. My life has been an open book——"

"A wide-open book," said Eddie smoothly. "Wide open and perfectly legible. I seem to read the printed page. There are ladies who call you 'Jule.' There are ladies who call you 'Baldy.' So far as going under an alias is concerned, that would be news in

Royalmont. And it will be, if you don't come through."

"Eddie, you wouldn't——"

"Don't kid yourself, my boy. I certainly would. Come on, now. Are you for her or are you not—Baldy? Answer me quick."

"Eddie, you never talked to me like this before——"

"I never had to. How about it, Baldy? Yes or no?"

"I—er—— Understand, I am not moved by these threats of blackmail or——"

"You'd better be," said Eddie.

"I am not—but—— How much do you want?"

"A blank check. And if you stop payment on it—— Thanks, Julian! Very generous of you."

"And now I'll let you do all this explaining you wanted to do," Julian began, when a knot of people came through the outer room and swept toward the doorway.

They were two detectives, Mrs. Helena McCune, Howard Hamar, who paused to ask the *Dispatch* district reporter:

"Have they got her booked?"

"No, they're waiting for the identification."

"Never mind," said Hamar. "Whether she's the bandit or not, there's a whale of a human-interest story here and we've got most of it exclusive. I've got the diary——"

Sweeping Eddie and Julian before them, they swarmed into the back room.

"Ah, Mrs. McCune!" said the inspector. "Is this the woman?"

"It certainly is." Through her steel-rimmed spectacles, Mrs. McCune's eyes shone like burnished swords. "Miss Lanneaux, alias Vaile, who told me night before last that nobody'd ever know she'd been in my house at all. But I ain't been in this business twenty years without knowing how to take my precautions. If she took my picture, she left hers—and I knew what to do with it, too, young woman!"

"Took your picture?" said Marge.

"Yes, inspector, after she was gone I found my crayon portrait missing with my lifetime savings——"

"Your crayon portrait?" said Eddie. "Why, I've got that!"

Mrs. McCune swung round on him.

"You?" she shrieked. "And you're the fellow that was huggin' and kissin' this girl in my parlor, no longer ago than day before yesterday!"

Marge turned crimson again; Julian turned white. Howard Hamar, who noticed everything, slipped to Julian's side and began to whisper in his ear.

"Inspector," said Mrs. McCune, her finger pointed at Eddie, "if you want the bobbed-haired bandit's partner, alias Bosworth Collantine——"

Then everybody was talking at once—Hamar talking to Julian, Julian talking to Hamar, Mrs. McCune talking to the inspector and the detectives talking to Eddie, till the sudden fluff of a flash light at the door silenced them for an instant. John P. Carlton's strident voice rose before the others could start again.

"Here, here, this isn't the Democratic National Convention! Eddie Reeve hasn't got brains enough to be a bandit. Sit down, Eddie, and let's see if we can straighten this out."

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER THE BONDS.

IN twenty minutes they had it straightened out, sufficiently to send Eddie with two detectives back to his club to get the crayon portrait. Meanwhile there was another complication; Mr. and Mrs. Borgerding from Omaha, victims of the bobbed-haired bandit, were on hand to identify Marge. They thought it looked like her, but couldn't be sure; but they were getting surer every moment as Eddie and his escort

got into their taxi and started for the Kappa Chi Club.

On the way he lived through a thousand years of agonized apprehension. Some club servant would have found the portrait, discovered the bonds tacked inside the frame, carried it off to the eternal ruin of Eddie and Marge and——

But none of these dire things had happened. The portrait was where he had left it, in his closet, behind his dressing gown and, when the detectives pried up a corner of one of the boards behind the picture, they found the twelve green crinkly bonds still in their wonted place.

Back to the police station, then; but the traffic was heavier, now, and it was slow going. They came back to the outer room to find it empty. The desk lieutenant nodded toward the closed door of the inner room.

"What's your hurry, Sheehan? You don't get the reward for the bandit."

"How come?"

"Hell's poppin' inside there. This is a big night for bobbed-haired bandits. They just caught another one over at the Biltrox—her and her partner, in the act of doin' their stuff. This looks like the right one. The Borgerdings have identified her, too. They'd identify anybody, but this one was collared in the act——"

"The hell you say!"

"Same old game," said the lieutenant. "There was three or four couples havin' a few drinks in somebody's parlor upstairs when in come our little couple. They get the door open; then down come the masks, out comes the cannon, up go the hands—all but one. They was a bird there from the Big Bend of Texas and he slammed a bottle against the guy's bean and grabbed the girl before she could reach her gat. That was where the bobbed-haired lady let her foot slip. I was on the border with the old Sixty-ninth in 1916 and I learned you gotta be careful when you start anything around these jaspers from the Big Bend. And the funny thing is, her hair wasn't bobbed at all and——"

But Eddie was already inside. There sat the group he had left—all but Julian and Hamar—and in their place sat the pale-faced Hymie and Marie Selver, a gray-squirrel coat over her shoulders. On the inspector's desk lay a black mask and a black bobbed wig that had covered her golden hair.

"Hello, Eddie!" she said cheerily. "Big night for Royalmont, eh?"

"Aha!" the inspector grunted. "Eddie, you keep bad company. We picked one friend of yours as the bobbed-haired bandit and we picked wrong. But this lady seems to know you——"

"I don't believe she did it," said Eddie loyally.

The inspector laughed.

"Didn't you hear me telling your cousin that we New Yorkers don't know how our friends live, or what names they wear? This girl had an apartment off Central Park West, but she lived at the Biltrox, too, and she lived at the Roxwell when the Borgerdings were stuck up—— Oh, yes, they identified her. Not that we needed to do it."

"I guess not," said Marie wearily. "Time for me to take the tank, I guess, before Hymie beats me to it. I told him, Eddie, that this was a bad night to start anything; but he was lost in the snowstorm and would have his way. Anyway, I owed you something for losing you your job at the Minaret and I thought maybe if we did our refined-comedy act while these thick-headed bulls were working on this girl you're hipped on, it might distract their minds. If it hadn't been for that hard egg from Texas—— Well, come along, inspector. Lead me to the coop. Got to get my beauty sleep before I see the judge in the morning."

CHAPTER XVII.

JUST A THOUSAND.

SOME time afterward, Marge and Eddie came down the steps of the police station.

"Free!" she said. "Oh, Eddie, think of that—I can go anywhere and do anything. I've been beefing and complaining about my luck ever since I lost my job and all the time I didn't know that it was the biggest luck in the world just to be free! Poor Miss Selver!"

"Yes," said Eddie, "I guess she was out of luck when she teamed up with poor Hymie. Where do we go now?"

"Well, we didn't have a chance to eat dinner and I'm absolutely ravenous!"

"I don't suppose we'd be welcome back on the Minaret roof," said Eddie. "But there's a chop house just across the street."

"Let's go," said Marge. "But—Eddie! Will they let me go back to the Minaret to sleep to-night? All my clothes are there—might as well stay there till to-morrow, anyway. But will they let me in?"

"They'll let you in," he told her. "I don't think you can get damages out of anybody—Schrenkeisen, or Mrs. McCune, or anybody else—for false arrest. They had a pretty fair prima-facie case against you and no jury would give you much of a verdict. But just the same, they won't give you a stronger case by turning you out. You can stay there—while your money lasts. And then?"

"Let's not think about that now. What I want to think about is a combination mutton chop and a big baked potato."

THEY crossed the street. Down the sidewalk came an adult newsboy, the early editions of the morning papers tucked under his arm. His roarings filled the street.

"Wow, *News Dispatch!* oh, bobbed-haired bandit caught——"

Eddie bought a *Morning Dispatch* and, when he and Marge had given their order at an alcove table in the warm, smoke-filled dining room, he spread the paper out before them. They stared and gasped and groaned. Clear across the front page ran a double black headline, two inches high:

BOBBED-HAIRED BANDIT SUSPECT QUESTIONED—GIRL EDITOR LED DOUBLE LIFE, POLICE SAY.

From the double streamer, a three-column head fell away in diminishing banks:

MARGERY LANNEAUX, FICTION EDITOR BY DAY, LIVED ALLEGED NIGHT-CRIME LIFE STRANGER THAN FICTION.

MILLIONAIRE FIANCE APPALLED BY DISCLOSURE.

Wealthy Manufacturer Pledges Fortune in Defense of Broadway Love Slave Whose Life Copyrighted Diary Reveals.

Bosworth Collantine Sought in Underworld Haunts.

"Well," said Eddie after a long gloomy silence, "crash goes the old front at last!"

"But. Eddie, I never kept a diary—— Oh!"

She had found it, two columns wide in black-faced type, starting on the front page under the bold line:

Copyright, 1925, by the New York *Morning Dispatch.*

I wonder if all good women have within them the seeds of degradation such as mine. For I, too, was a good woman once——

"Eddie," said Marge weakly, "I—I was writing for *Heart Confessions!*"

"As if I couldn't guess that, from your first paragraph. An old fiction editor like you ought to have known better than to write a first-person story."

"But, Eddie, isn't this libelous——"

"I'm not a lawyer. As a newspaper man, I'd say no. It's libelous in theory, but a jury would say that a lady who'd been questioned by a detective inspector and the district attorney for an hour and a half couldn't complain of a story like this."

"That I had no reputation left to lose, in other words?"

"Just about that," he admitted. "But the diary—that's another matter. If they stole a fiction story out of a drawer and printed it under their own copyright line, as a diary—— Let me see about this, Marge."

"Here are the chops," she told him.

"You go ahead. I want to do a little telephoning first."

FIVE minutes later he came back from the booth, grinning.

"Talked to the managing editor of the *Dispatch,*" he announced. "Told him I was your lawyer. He's pulling this alleged diary out of the second edition, but it's been printed and sold by the *Dispatch* syndicate to papers all over the country—including Royal mont."

"Royalmont! Good heavens, I'll be ashamed to go back."

"Why go back?" Eddie asked cheerfully. "Make your people come to see you in New York. Nobody will remember this in New York, longer than two weeks; there's too much else to think about."

"But unless I get a job pretty soon—this week—I'll have to go back. I'm broke!"

"Oh, no, you're not. I pointed out that this was either libel, or larcenous publication of copyrightable material without the author's consent, or both. So the long and short of it is that they're willing to print a retraction and they'll give you a thousand dollars to settle the thing out of court."

"A thousand dollars!" said Marge eagerly. Then her voice changed. "After all, it's not so very much, is it, for the ruin of my reputation?"

"About what your reputation's worth." he told her, "after the mishaps of this evening. You might get more, if you sued; but if you got a verdict they'd carry it on to a higher court and you'd spend thousands before you got a nickel—if you ever got anything. As your alleged lawyer, I advise you to take it."

"All right," said Marge. "Anybody of good moral character can do without a reputation, anyway, but a thousand dollars is always useful. And as your sincere well-wisher, I advise you to eat that chop before it's cold."

They finished the chops and lit cigarettes.

"I know this is hard luck," Eddie told her, "but you—you don't want to lose heart, Marge——"

"It's my own fault. If I hadn't tried to cover my tracks so that my friends wouldn't find out what I was doing, if I hadn't insisted on keeping up a front no matter how many lies I had to tell, I'd never have got into it."

"And if I hadn't tried to help you out with my usual heavy-footed clumsiness," said Eddie, "you wouldn't have got Julian suspicious——"

"No, that was my fault. I ought to have told him the truth right away. But I couldn't—— Oh, you know Julian."

"Certainly I know Julian," said Eddie, with a grin. "I told Julian a few things to-night that I'd never told him before—that nobody else ever told him before, for that matter. After twenty-eight years, I've at last quit being afraid of Julian. I'm as good as he is, by

and large, and I know it. He doesn't know it, of course, but who cares?"

"I care," said Marge. "I know it was stupid of me to go on lying to him, but I just simply couldn't let him know I was broke and beaten, could I? And now I've disgraced him——"

"Disgraced him? You haven't disgraced him. You've just given him a chance to shine in brighter brilliance of moral glory. Didn't you see that line in the head—'Wealthy Manufacturer Pledges Fortune in Defense of Broadway Love Slave?'"

"Eddie! When he'd thrown me over?"

"He didn't throw you over. He thought better of it, at the door, and gave me a blank check to hire a lawyer for you. And didn't you read the lead of Hamar's story? Look at it."

She looked.

Bowed with anguish, a strong and reticent wealthy man stood on the steps of the West Fifty-third Street police station last night and pledged his entire fortune in defense of the sweetheart who had betrayed and deceived him, who had sworn to wed him even while she led a double life among the night clubs of Broadway.

The man was Julian Reeve, president of the Royalmont Carpet Company, associate of members of the Morgan firm and intimate of wealthy financiers. The woman for whom he offered all, even after her faithlessness had been revealed, was known to thousands as Margery Lanneaux, magazine editor, to other thousands as Vivien Vaile, self-confessed love slave of Bosworth Collantine, habitué of the White Light district.

"Forgive her?" sobbed Mr. Reeve. "Of course I forgive her! While I live, my last dollar is at the service of that little girl of whose innocence I was convinced till her own words undermined my faith——"

Marge groaned.

"You can't get around Julian, can you? He always wins. Eddie! How did he come to give you a blank check, after he'd told me——"

"Why—why—he thought better of it—his nobler nature came to the surface——"

"Eddie," said Marge, her voice curiously unsteady, "what have you got on Julian?"

"Not a thing," he told her. "But I know him—he'll forgive you, Marge. He was sore because you—er—fibbed to him, but he'll get over it."

"He didn't look as if he'd get over it," said Marge.

"But he will," Eddie assured her. After all, what was the use of having a hold on Julian if you couldn't use it again? "I promise you that. You can square yourself with Julian."

"Oh, Eddie!" She rocked with laughter. "You're positively the worst liar in the world. I know you've got something on him——"

"Well, I haven't, I tell you! And if you're going to marry him, you needn't think that there's anything that——"

"I going to marry him? Why, that's all off."

"Oh, I know, but that was only a lovers' quarrel. It will be all right tomorrow."

"Eddie!" said Marge. "Do you think I'd marry Julian, after to-night?"

"I don't see why you shouldn't!"

"Well, to give you just one reason out of many, because I'm going to marry you."

"Marry me? Since when?"

"Why, I've known that for quite a while. Ever since Julian began asking questions. You didn't ask me questions—not ever."

"Oh, I didn't need to. I didn't know just what you'd been up to, but I knew it was all right."

"Because we've never kept up a front before each other," said Marge. "We never had to. And considering the trouble we've got into by trying to keep up a front, I think we'd both of us better marry somebody who knows the worst and doesn't care. That means me for you and you for me. That's one reason I'm going to marry you.

Another one is that I'm crazy about you——"

"Marge!"

"Put that down to Julian's credit, too," she admitted. "I didn't know it till I got engaged to him and that's true."

"Then I'll take that job doing publicity for the theological seminary endowment drive——"

"You don't want to take it, do you?"

"What's the difference?" Eddie demanded. "I want to marry you. I'd rather take you and the job than miss you on account of the job."

"Eddie, is that a good play you're writing?"

"You bet it's a good play! But it isn't finished and it means weeks of work, even before it's in shape to be read——"

"And to-morrow," said Marge, "I'm going to get a thousand dollars from the *Morning Dispatch*. Well, Eddie, I'll marry you on one condition—that we live on that thousand while you're finishing your play."

"But, gosh, Marge, we couldn't put up much of a front on that—— Oh! My dear, you're right. I guess we don't need a front now, do we?"

"Not at home," said Marge. "And I know all sorts of tricks that will make us look prosperous when we go out and around. That is, if you're not ashamed to marry me, after this story has been spread in Royalmont."

"On the contrary," said Eddie, "I've never had the slightest idea of marrying anybody else, since I was six years old and you were four. We've always brought our troubles to each other and we always will. As Julian says, there's nothing like keeping up old associations among people who come from the same home town."

The full-length book in the next issue of POPULAR *is "Rubies," by L. Adams Beck, a story of the glamour and mystery of the Far East and of marvelous jewels from a forgotten city.*

THE GRATEFUL GUEST

AT the close of last Derby day, Robert T. Small, the Washington journalist, sat in the office of Colonel Matt Winn and Colonel Andrew Vinnie, the twin Napoleons of Kentucky racing and as polished hosts as ever extended the hand of welcome.

Suddenly the doorway was darkened by the giant figure of a man. He was six feet two in height and built in proportion. He had a pompadour of iron-gray hair and ironlike strength in his face. He wore a pink tie and a checked suit of a by no means subdued hue. Even a casual glance sized him up as a man of force, a dominating personality.

"My name's Coughlin!" he announced in a bass voice, bull-like in its volume. "And I'm from Chicago. And I just dropped in here to tell you I had a swell time to-day. Believe me, men, this is a swell place and full of swell people! Everybody's treated me swell and I want to tell you I don't never forget anybody who treats me swell like that!"

With that, he saluted and departed.

"Who is he?" Small inquired.

"That," replied one of the colonels, "is the famous 'Bath House John' of Chicago, once one of the most powerful men in the politics of the Windy City. His friend and coworker in the days of his dominance was the equally famous 'Hinky Dink.'"

The Night Pumper at Green River

By Charles Matthias

Revenge is the stepfather of tragedy, and once aroused in the breast of man it burns with unquenchable flame until its destiny is fulfilled, its purpose accomplished. In a little town of the old West, lived a man whom the world had forgotten and who in his turn had forgotten the world, until a woman crossed his trail and awaked within him the slumbering passion of revenge.

CHAPTER I.

A RUN OF LUCK.

RISING from a dreary waste of sagebrush, greasewood and sand that stretched away to the eastward, the morning sun threw his beams full into the face of Mr. William Blackton, night pumper for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Co., at Green River, Utah, as he sat dozing in a chair on the little platform in front of the pump house. He squirmed uneasily under the glare, made two or three half-awake efforts to turn his head so as to avoid it, then gasped several times and finally opened his eyes.

Once fairly awake, he swore softly to himself, jumped from his chair and listened for a moment to the monotonous *chung-chang, chung-chang, chung-chang* of the pump that was forcing the pale-green water from the river into the huge tank that towered up beside the railroad track.

Then he walked briskly into the boiler room, looked at the glass water gauge, tried the cocks as a double measure of precaution, opened the furnace door and stirred up the blackening coals, threw in three or four shovels of fuel, and then, returning to his chair, sat down once more and gazed, blinking and yawning, at the unattractive landscape.

Half a mile away, toward the west, he could see the hamlet of Green River —four saloons with bunk-house attachment, a combined blacksmith shop and feed store and a general store, whose

trade was mostly in salt pork and cartridges.

The yells of a party of cowboys, who had ridden over from Grand Valley the preceding evening and who were still enjoying themselves, after the manner of their tribe, in Jack Dunn's "tunnel" or dugout saloon, were borne faintly to his ears by the morning breeze that swept over the mesa. The occasional crack of a six-shooter told him that Mr. Dunn's guests, in the exuberance of their enjoyment, were further perforating the roof of that gentleman's establishment, which already bore the appearance of a huge sieve, as the result of similar previous attentions.

Such sounds as these, however, had long ago lost their novelty for Mr. Blackton. Ten years passed west of the one hundredth meridian had familiarized him with all those sights and sounds that attract the curiosity of the newcomer from the lands on the higher side of the Mississippi. Adaptable, unexacting, careless of comfort or, indeed, of anything save the absolute necessities—clothes, food and shelter—he had been by turns cowboy, prospector, railroader on half a dozen mountain lines, woodchopper, freighter, driver of four to eight span of mules hitched to a Conestoga wagon—anything and everything at which a living could be made by a man willing to work for it and not particular about his comforts.

MR. BLACKTON had seen and tried it all. He knew men of his kind over many hundreds of miles and was neither better nor worse than the average of them. There was a vague belief among his acquaintances—intimates he had none—that he had once been married and that his wife had gone to the bad; in other words, that she had run off with another man. Whether this misty rumor were true or not, it was certain that, if he had ever had a liking for the sex, he had thoroughly overcome it.

And, in truth, he looked as little like a lady's man as possible as he sat there that morning, a little lean man, with a big tawny mustache, grizzled hair and a reddish-purple scar on his cheek—reminder of a struggle with a refractory mule that had stopped the wheels of progress in Montana three or four years before.

Nor did his felt hat, blue flannel shirt, and high-heeled cowboy boots tend to give him the air of a carpet knight. He looked just what he was, a rough-and-ready "rustler," capable of turning a hand to almost anything.

It is but fair to say, however, that he was not looking his best on that particular morning, for the reason that, save for the uneasy nap from which he had just awakened, he had had no sleep to speak of during two days and as many nights. He had been very busy, after a fashion, and this particular fashion was an exhausting one. That is to say, Mr. Blackton had been gambling.

When the pay car had stopped at Green River a week previous, Mr. Blackton had received his monthly wages, some sixty-five or seventy dollars, and, after paying what he owed at the eating house and the "tunnel," he had something like thirty-five dollars left.

There was no faro game in any of the Green River saloons and he wrestled with temptation for the next two days. Then he succumbed, made an arrangement with his "side partner," the day pumper, to work night and day until he returned, got in a train and rode up to Pleasant Valley, the end of the division.

Pleasant Valley—this was in the year 1883—was so named because it was the vilest and most uninviting spot this side of the orthodox Sheol. Drunken coal miners, equally alcoholic quarrymen, tinhorn gamblers, overland tramps

and other offscourings of creation made up the heterogeneous population of some six hundred souls—if souls they had.

The inhabitants were divided into two classes—those who dealt faro and sold whisky, and those who "played bank" and drank whisky. The first-named got the money. The last had the fun—or thought they had. Sometimes, however, a lamb would shear the wolves.

When Mr. Blackton alighted from the train in this delectable valley he strolled in and out of the various "hurdy-gurdies," took a drink with a chance acquaintance and looked in on several faro games in progress.

It was some time before he found a place to please him. In one he didn't like the looks of the dealer; in another a cross-eyed man was "keeping cases;" in a third he stumbled as he crossed the threshold. He couldn't afford to risk his thirty-five dollars against any of these games. Finally, however, he found himself in the establishment of Mr. Alexander McCrorie, known in that region as "Scotty," known also as a square man and one who had divers notches on the scarred handle of his six-shooter.

MR. McCRORIE was a peculiar and rather unusual specimen of the man-killer. His reputation was not one of those made by dark hints about "the man that went up agin' me down in Durango and never went up agin' no one else;" or, "feller that didn't shoot swift enough over in the Gunnison country when we had an argyment over a maverick."

No, his reputation was not of that kind. Every one of his achievements was known from Salida to Salt Lake City along the Rio Grande road. Mr. McCrorie had earned his fame by untiring industry and strict attention to business.

He was a most meek and unassuming person. His eyes were a very light gray and rather watery. His mustache, of no particular color, drooped over his mouth in forlorn and ragged fashion. Naturally below the medium height, he was very much stoop shouldered and this added to his general appearance of apologizing for being alive.

His humble bearing probably had much to do with his killing ways. "Bad men" searching for some safe subject upon whom to display their wit or vent their ill humor would select Mr. McCrorie and would not discover their mistake until they were fitted out with a pair of wings and a harp. He was not an unmixed evil.

Into the gambling house presided over by this gentleman strolled Mr. Blackton. He looked on for a while, making mental notes of the run of the cards, and then began to play in a quiet way.

He had an intimate acquaintance with the noble game of faro; in fact, during his omnivorous Western career he had now and then sat on the dealer's side of the table. No man knew better than he the value of "pressing his luck" and, when he began to win, he increased his bets.

All the time-honored, regulation tactics were employed against him in vain. They changed the dealer on him twice without avail. They put in new cards and he "called the turn for the limit." They tried to get him to drink whisky; he refused and continued to win right through the deal.

Finally, as a last resort, the great Scotty himself, Achilles of the host, sat down to deal, but even his transcendent skill and genius were unavailing; the fates were with Mr. Blackton.

At last, in the middle of a deal, Mr. McCrorie stopped and "sized up" the checks in front of his antagonist. Then he turned the dealing box softly face downward on the table and announced

calmly, in a voice unruffled by emotion: "That breaks us, partner; cash in."

Mr. Blackton had won twenty-five hundred dollars and broken the bank, a feat quite as deserving of mention as if he had done the same thing at Monte Carlo, for it should be remembered that he labored under many disadvantages.

He "staked" two or three admiring acquaintances to small amounts, invited every one present to take a drink and walked out of the gambling house and down to the railroad with his money in his pocket.

Now, if he had either got drunk and spent his money, or "run up against a brace box" and lost it; or—third possibility—if he had got aboard a train and returned to Green River that evening, this story never would have been written. There would have been none to tell.

Fate, however, in which Mr. Blackton, like all other gamblers, was a firm believer—Fate ordained that the eastbound train should be late that day and further, that, while he loitered around the ramshackle station waiting for it, the westbound train should clatter in. The conductor, as he glanced up and down the platform, saw Mr. Blackton standing there, leaning against the freight room, and called to him.

"Hi, Billy," he said. "Going over to Salt Lake?"

"No; going back to Green River on No. 4."

"No. 4 is three hours late. You'd better come with us and go back to the River to-morrow. Skip on!" he continued, as the train began to move.

Mr. Blackton hesitated a moment, cast his eye over the unattractive surroundings, reflected hurriedly that a three-hour wait would be tiresome with nothing to do save loiter around the saloons and gambling houses, which had now lost their charm. Then he swung onto the last car of the train as it labored out toward Soldier Summit.

CHAPTER II.

IN PARLOR D.

LIGHTS twinkled in windows and in street lamps when the train arrived in Salt Lake City. Three or four hotel hacks were backed up at the station platform, their attendant runners voicing the praises of the respective establishments they represented as the travelers alighted.

Mr. Blackton preferred to walk uptown. As he started, he noticed how long the blocks were and, consequently, how great the distance between the street lamps. He grinned at the thought that he wouldn't have paid any attention to these matters seven or eight hours before. Now, however, he was a "capitalist," as he would have expressed it, and wealth brought its cares and responsibilities.

He transferred his six-shooter from his hip pocket to the side pocket of his coat, struck into the middle of the street and trudged thoughtfully onward.

On Main Street, after he had left the ill-lighted and deserted side streets behind him, a friend—a freight conductor off duty—hailed him and the two walked along together. As they neared the Walker House, where it was Mr. Blackton's purpose to invite his friend to join him in a prefatory drink, a carriage drove up and stopped in front of the hotel.

"English tourists," said Mr. Blackton's friend, as the occupants of the carriage prepared to alight. "You can tell 'em a mile off."

Mr. Blackton's gaze, which had wandered up the street toward the great Mormon temple, was recalled. He looked at the people in the carriage. A young man, of twenty-eight or thirty, was gathering up some wraps that lay beside him on the seat of the open carriage. Opposite him sat a placid old lady strongly resembling him in features. At her side was a handsome,

brown-haired woman, who might have been twenty-five or thirty-five years old —one of those women who wear well and do not betray their age.

"Hello!" exclaimed Mr. Blackton.

"What?" said the freight conductor inquiringly. Then, noticing that Mr. Blackton was staring at the younger woman in the carriage—"Good-looking woman, hey? Some of 'em are handsome. When you get a real swell Englishwoman, she is handsome, sure, but when she isn't, she's as ugly as the devil!"

"You're right about that," responded Mr. Blackton, as he watched the young man and the two women enter the hotel. "Some of 'em are as ugly as the devil. Let's go and take a drink before supper."

Mr. Blackton walked into the hotel office and up to the desk; he picked up a pen and wrote his name in the register. Then he turned back two or three days' entries in the book, running his eye down each page as he turned the leaves. He came to these entries:

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Leven, England.
Mrs. Margaret Leven, England.

"Are these the people that just came in?" he asked, pointing to the entries in the register. "Big, young Englishman, good-looking woman and an old lady?"

The clerk looked at the names.

"Yes, that's the party. Been out to Fort Douglass and doing the town generally. Been here two days and going East to-morrow night. Friend with you to supper? All right," he continued, and made some hieroglyphics on the register as Mr. Blackton and his companion disappeared in the dining room.

SEATED in the billiard room puffing a brier-root pipe, Mr. Blackton, later, discoursed of indifferent matters with his friend until that gentleman declared it time for him to be getting down to the railroad yard to see to the making up of his train, for he was to journey eastward that night.

Left alone, Mr. Blackton still puffed at his pipe and watched in abstracted fashion two commercial travelers playing billiards at the table in front of him. Finally, he hailed a bell boy hurrying by.

"Perhaps you'd like to make a dollar," he said, producing a coin of that denomination and displaying it between thumb and forefinger.

The bell boy was acquisitive but cautious.

"What do you want me to do?" he demanded. "If it has anything to do with a poker game in your bedroom, I can't do it. They won't have it, and I——"

"No," interrupted Mr. Blackton soberly, "I don't want you to 'cap' a skin game for me. This is entirely legitimate. Go and get me a blank card from the desk. Thank you. Now"—writing something on it—"put that in your pocket and, when you get a chance, hand it to Mrs. Leven, that young Englishwoman. You know her, don't you? Better wait until her husband is out of the way. Here's your dollar and I'll give you another one, if you don't make a mess of it."

Mr. Blackton smoked and waited in the billiard room, occasionally lounging into the office, where other men were smoking, lounging and talking. The bell boy flitted in and out upon various errands, but made no sign.

Men talked mining and cattle raising, strolled into the barroom, drank, and talked mining and cattle raising again. Other men read newspapers and dozed in their chairs. Still others yawned vociferously, stretched themselves, called for their room keys and went off to bed.

The crowd had begun to thin out when Mr. Blackton's emissary came

from the upper regions, walked to where he was seated and whispered:

"She's in Parlor D."

Mr. Blackton nodded without speaking and remained seated for some moments. Then he, too, went to the clerk's desk and asked for his key. His bell boy was conveniently at hand and the clerk gave him the customary order to show the gentleman to so-and-so.

On the second floor, the bell boy pointed to a half-open door. Mr. Blackton reached into his pocket, drew forth a coin and handed it to his guide, who thanked him and disappeared, leaving him alone in the hall.

In the room with the half-open door some one was playing Weber's "Invitation to the Dance," touching the keys of the piano softly and caressingly. A breeze from the Wahsatch Mountains fluttered the curtains of the window at the end of the hall. The street below was almost deserted and only an occasional footfall echoed along the pavement. In the hotel itself, save for the piano, there was no sound.

Mr. Blackton stood and listened for a moment, beating time involuntarily with his foot upon the carpet to the rhythm of the music. Then he shrugged his shoulders, advanced to the door and walked into the room.

THE woman at the piano was not the young Englishwoman and for a moment he thought the boy had played him a trick, until he saw at the farther end of the long room the sheen of a white dress. The piano player's back was turned to him and he walked across the room and sat down, as Mrs. Leven, by a gesture, indicated to him.

As she did so she held out her hand to him—a small, shapely, white, ladylike hand—a perfect hand, save that the third finger was missing, the stump being covered by a little black silk cap.

Mr. Blackton evidently had not counted upon the friendly movement, but the offer was so plain, so ostentatious almost, that he put out his own hand and pressed the one offered him with something like cordiality. Then he waited for her to speak.

"I got your card," she said, at last, looking curiously at him; "and, though I couldn't imagine how you came here or why you should care to see me, I sent my husband to bed and then told the boy to bring you up here. You needn't mind her," she continued, in answer to a motion of his head in the direction of the piano. "She doesn't know me—some guest of the hotel—and it would make no difference if she did know me. You and I have no terrible secrets to exchange, have we?"

She smiled and he looked at her as curiously as she had a moment before regarded him.

"You are not looking prosperous," she went on, taking him in from head to foot with a quick glance. "Perhaps you——"

"You are mistaken," interrupted Mr. Blackton. "I have plenty of money—that is, it seems plenty to me—more than I have had for a long time before. To tell you the truth," he went on, "I hardly know why I wanted to see you—to talk to you, I mean. I saw you and your husband—the tall, young fellow is your husband?—getting out of the carriage in front of the hotel and the first glance at you—*caramba!*—it almost took my breath away! I thought for an instant it was Laura. You look more like her as you grow older. I never saw such a resemblance. Anyway, I thought I'd like to have a little talk with you for old times' sake. There's no need to ask if you're prosperous. I suppose your husband is rich. Who is he and where did you get him—or he get you?"

A little line on either side of the nose, reaching down to the corner of the mouth, gradually melted away from Mrs. Leven's face as Mr. Blackton

talked familiarly on. She smiled again as she spoke.

"I met him at home in Lancashire. You know, when Laura died you were——" She stopped short.

"I was in jail," said Mr. Blackton calmly, helping her out. "Go on."

"Well—I didn't mean to recall that, but you know I was left alone in Philadelphia with little money and no friends, so I returned to England. There I, at least, had relatives, as you know, near Oldham. They received me kindly and, in a little time, I met Mr. Leven. He—well, he liked me and so did his mother, who is the kindest old lady in the world; so there was no difficulty. He is a dear, good fellow, not rich, as you think, but well off. We get along nicely. We are taking this American trip because he wanted to see the places where I lived when Laura and I were together. I have told him all about our hard times and all that."

"And about me?"

"Not by name, no. And I didn't tell him just all about Laura. You wouldn't have expected me to do so, would you?" she asked, as if appealing to his judgment.

"Well, no," he replied, "not if you intended to tell the truth—as nearly as a woman can. That constituted the principal difference between you and Laura. Her aversion to the truth was constitutional."

"Laura was my sister," said Mrs. Leven, a little flutter perceptible in her nostrils.

"Yes, and she was my wife," replied Mr. Blackton calmly—"worse luck for me. It's not worth while to quarrel over Laura. But there's one thing I really should like to know and I think you can tell me. Who forged the check? Was it she or Marshall who did the work?"

The little lines down to the corners of Mrs. Leven's mouth became distinct again.

"It was charged that you forged it," she said.

Mr. Blackton looked at her steadily.

"Now what is your idea in saying that to me?" he remarked, almost reflectively. "You and I were good enough friends and I never credited you with complicity in any of Laura's deviltry. What is your idea in saying that to me when you know perfectly well that the accusation was false."

"Yet you went to State's prison for it."

THERE was a pause. Mr. Blackton looked hard at the woman, as if puzzled.

"You've certainly developed some of Laura's mental traits along with your physical resemblance to her," he said, at last. "I suppose I shouldn't blame you, though. Laura, as you say, was your sister and, even if she did outdo Becky Sharp by sending me, her husband, to the penitentiary on a false charge of forgery, while she and that man lived riotously on the proceeds of——"

"You lie!" exclaimed Mrs. Leven, clenching her hands and bending forward, her face white with passion.

Mr. Blackton leaned back in his chair. In his eyes there was a look of astonishment mingled with growing suspicion. The woman at the piano had heard the vehement exclamation and, after striking a few disconnected chords, arose, glanced curiously at the incongruous pair and left the room.

The movement seemed to recall Mrs. Leven to her senses.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, trying to smile, "but you really shouldn't talk that way. Nothing is to be gained by raking up that old affair. Besides, you know that I had nothing to do with it."

"Certainly not, certainly not," assented Mr. Blackton hastily. "Still, living in the same house with her, as

you did for some little time after my—disappearance, I naturally thought that you might have had some information about the—the matter, you know."

"None at all," replied Mrs. Leven, who by this time had regained her composure and with it an anxiety to appear conciliatory. "Laura gave me none of her confidence. I knew some things, of course, but what could I do? I couldn't tell you of them at the time and, when she died, I went back to England, as I have told you."

The look of suspicion in Mr. Blackton's eyes had deepened as the woman talked. When she finished, he spoke deliberately.

"It was perhaps just as well for every one that Laura died when she did," said he. "When I was released from the penitentiary, my intention was to kill her first and then kill Marshall."

The little lines became sharper than ever.

"As I say, fortunately for every one, Laura was dead."

He paused a moment; Mrs. Leven tried to look unconcerned.

"It may interest you to know, however," he went on, "that I was able to carry out a part of my intention. I met Marshall seven years ago—and shot him."

Mrs. Leven stared at him, her teeth shut. She threw her right hand back of her head and brought it forward again over her shoulder, with the palm to the front—a peculiar movement.

"Ah," said Mr. Blackton quietly, "I *know* you now."

The woman strove to speak. Then she attempted to rise from her chair. Still staring at him, she struggled to her feet, but almost immediately sank down again, gasped for breath and quietly fainted.

"Couldn't control her temper," said Mr. Blackton contemplatively; "always her weakness."

He showed no sign of alarm or flurry. Evidently he had seen women faint before, or he had counted upon this one fainting. A queer look—half satisfaction, half disgust—came upon his face.

He walked to a table where a bunch of flowers rested in a clear glass vase half filled with water. He threw the flowers on the floor and picked up the vase. Then he set it down again and walked back to where Mrs. Leven was lying in the chair.

CHAPTER III.

FOOLED, FOR A TIME.

BLACKTON hesitated a moment and then, taking her right hand, which hung limp over the arm of the chair, he drew off the little black silk cap that covered the maimed finger. Again the look of mingled satisfaction and disgust appeared.

Dropping the hand, he went back, picked up the vase and, dipping his fingers in the water, began sprinkling the woman's face. A few drops ran down, making spots on her white dress. He put the vase back on the table, resumed his seat and waited.

When Mrs. Leven recovered consciousness, she saw him sitting there, calm, unconcerned. He might have been a spectator of some theatrical performance for any emotion that he manifested.

"Do you feel better?" he asked at last, in a matter-of-fact way.

She looked bewildered; then her remembrance returned.

"Do you feel better?" he asked again.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, paying no attention to his question. "Are you going to tell my—Mr. Leven?"

Mr. Blackton regarded her with cool interest.

"You have more sense than I gave you credit for," he replied. "You don't think it worth while to attempt to hood-

wink me any longer. That is sensible. *Por Dios!* I almost admire you." And he lay back in his chair and regarded her critically.

"You fooled me," he confessed at length, "until you told me that I lied; then I suspected you. You're the only woman alive that could say it just that way. Then, you know, I had heard you tell me the same thing so often before. Well, well," he went on, looking at her with the approval that one bestows upon an ingenious machine, "if you hadn't lost your temper, I should have been completely fooled.

"And yet I shouldn't have been," he continued reflectively. "There were two or there tricks of voice and gesture that I should have recognized. It was that finger that threw me off. That was an inspiration, but what must it have cost you to spoil your pretty hand!"

"Will you answer my question?" she demanded. "What are you going to do? Do you mean to tell Mr. Leven?"

"Why, no; at least, not until I have had another talk with you," he replied. "That can be arranged, I suppose."

"We were to leave to-morrow," she answered.

"Find means to stay longer," he said. "I must really insist upon it. The—pleasure of meeting you, having deemed you dead these many years, is something that you can readily comprehend. I'm sure you appreciate my feelings."

"I will find some way to see you to-morrow," said the woman, still pale. "I—I am tired; I must go."

Mr. Blackton helped her from her chair. She walked slowly from the room, leaving him alone.

He leaned back in his chair and stared at the chandelier for some moments.

"Waugh!" he exclaimed, using the aboriginal note of admiration. "She's a great woman, even though she's a thorough devil. She hasn't eradicated the woman side of her completely, though. That finger, now. She had nerve enough to mutilate it, but too much vanity to take it off close to the hand. That was a weakness. If I had found that finger as it should have been, if she had played the deal through, it would almost have shaken me. She weakened, though, when I told her I had killed Marshall. She cared for Marshall if she cared for any one. I wonder if she realizes that I lied to her about killing him?"

He stared at the chandelier again.

"Offered to shake hands with me so that I'd notice that the finger was missing," he went on, addressing the chandelier. "That wasn't a good play, for I wondered at it at the time."

Another pause.

"Now, how the devil did she deceive the doctor and the neighbors into believing that it was she and not Annie who died? Annie did die—one of them died; I've found that out to a certainty. I must make her tell me about it."

A servant came to turn out the lights in the parlor. Mr. Blackton stared at the man for a moment without seeing him and then went off to bed.

At nine o'clock the next morning, he emerged from the breakfast room, lighted a pipe and took up his old position in the billiard room. He seemed undecided.

But there are children who are born with that receptiveness—financially—and that intuition that make up the character of a good detective. One of this kind was Mr. Blackton's bell boy. This urchin hungered for more money and his instinct told him that it might be had in exchange for information concerning Mrs. Leven.

THUS, while Mr. Blackton was debating dubiously what to do next, the boy sought him out and beckoned him to a more removed spot. The youth showed his knowledge of human

nature by refraining from asking for money in advance.

He merely drew two telegram blanks from his pocket.

"Here," he said. "I thought you might like to see these. I've been sent to the telegraph office with 'em."

Mr. Blackton took the two slips of paper without a word. One contained a cablegram addressed to the Reverend George Leven, at a small town in Lancashire. It ran:

All well; homeward bound.

The other was a telegram to a Denver hotel requesting that rooms be reserved for a date two days later.

Mr. Blackton made no scruple about reading them. When he had done so, he said:

"Buttons, you have a remarkable head for your age. You will either be a great man or you will wind up in the penitentiary; you show tendencies both ways, which is not unusual. Here is more money. Take it, Buttons, and beware that your propensity for getting money does not some day get you into jail."

This adjuration in no manner disturbed the equanimity of the youngster, who thanked Mr. Blackton courteously and started for the telegraph office

"Wait a minute!" called Mr. Blackton after him. "Come back. I've one more small job for you. Get me another blank card—the telegrams won't spoil."

The card was brought and Mr. Blackton, after reflecting a moment, wrote:

Upon second thought, I see no use in going over matters again. I leave this morning. Good-by.

He did not sign the message.

"Give that to Mrs. Leven when you come back from the telegraph office and keep your head shut if she tries to pump you. Be a wise boy. You savvy?"

"Sure!" replied the youth laconically, as he started once more upon his errand.

"Now, then," reflected Mr. Blackton, "they'll probably go to Denver, according to program and if I want them, I can find them. The question is: Do I really want to see any more of madame? What's the use? What shall I gain by raising Cain, as I undoubtedly can, if I feel disposed that way?

"Still," he went on, "here's this young Leven. He's probably crazy over her and she's quite likely to play some nasty trick on him, unless his eyes are opened. She can scarcely get him into the penitentiary—hardly possible. Still —I don't know just what my play ought to be. It's a case that requires deliberation and, as Green River is about as conducive to reflection as any place I know of, I'll go down there, let my side partner, O'Reilly, get a night's sleep and think the thing over."

An hour later Mr. Blackton was on board an eastbound train and within eight hours more he was at the pump house, inquiring of O'Reilly how he "stood the racket."

Mr. O'Reilly, a little red around the eyes and stretchy as to the limbs, announced, as in duty bound, that he was all right and could stand another night, if necessary.

"It's not necessary, Pat," said Mr. Blackton. "I'm all right for to-night myself. Tumble into your bunk and get twelve hours' sleep, for I'm going to jump the job to-morrow and you may have to work double trick again until they send a man to take my place."

"Stone won't pay ye if ye quit him without notice," said Mr. O'Reilly, by way of warning.

Mr. Blackton promptly cursed Stone and his pay.

"I made a winning at Pleasant Valley," he explained, "and I wouldn't be back here at all except to give you a chance to get some sleep."

"Ye're a good felly, Bill," said Mr. O'Reilly, standing in the door of the lean-to in which the bunks were set up. "There's mighty few would come back on that account. Good night," he concluded, and he disappeared in the shanty.

"Good night," replied Mr. Blackton.

HE burned a good deal of tobacco in the lonely hours that followed. He watched the moon rise over the mesa, dimming the stars that had twinkled so brilliantly through the clear, thin air.

Two or three times, after trains had passed, he walked over the bridge that spanned the river just east of the water tank to see that no ember from the locomotive had set fire to the structure. Occasionally he threw a little coal into the furnace.

Toward morning he became drowsy. Not caring to trust himself too far, he banked the fire beneath the boiler, after seeing that the water showed in the third gauge, and then sat down again, knowing that if he did go to sleep, the worst that could happen would be the stopping of the pump for lack of steam. He strove to keep awake—successfully at first and then without avail and sleep claimed him.

At last he fell into an uneasy doze, from which he was awakened by the sun, as it rose from the waste of sagebrush, greasewood and sand to the eastward, shining full in his face.

"Pat!" he cried, stepping to the door of the lean-to after everything had been put in order. "Pat! get out of that and let's go to breakfast."

There was a succession of snorts and groans from within, as of a heavy sleeper struggling with a desire to roll over and take another hour of it. Then a thump on the floor announced that Mr. O'Reilly had conquered the desires of the flesh. A moment later that gentleman appeared at the door airily attired in a pair of trousers and a red undershirt.

"Whoo!" he said, stretching himself like a giant refreshed and blinking in the bright sunlight like a young owl. "I feel tin years younger. It's a great sleep I had, Bill. How did ye fare yerself?"

"I banked the fire and had a nap," replied Mr. Blackton. "By the way, the water lacks only a foot of the top. There's no use keeping the pump going. I'll bank up again and we'll go to breakfast. But first I want to get a few things together in that war bag of mine. I'm not coming back here again."

Mr. Blackton busied himself in the shanty while the Irishman was dressing himself. The articles which he could crowd into his small valise were few. What was left—not a very valuable collection, to be sure—old coats, boots, a half-worn saddle, two or three flannel shirts and a rifle, he gave to O'Reilly.

"You can't use all of them yourself, Pat," he said, "the clothes mostly being too small for you; but they'll be all right for some poor devil tramping it past here. Give them to him with my compliments."

"Ye're a good felly, Bill," said the Irishman.

"Who told you so?" retorted Mr. Blackton, by way of evading the compliment. "Just a minute, Pat," he said, as they started to go, having stopped the pump and deadened the fire. He had been fumbling in his pocket. "Here's a hundred I want you to take for good luck."

O'Reilly backed away from the outstretched hand that contained the little roll of bills.

"Kape your money, Bill," he said; "I know well enough you're my friend without any money between us."

"You're an Irish fool, Pat," said Mr. Blackton calmly. "You've earned the hundred and more, too, because if you hadn't filled my trick I couldn't have

gone to Pleasant Valley to make the winning. You ought to have half of it by rights. So you won't take it? All right; then under the boiler it goes."

But Mr. O'Reilly, being a reasonable person, was not proof against this kind of argument and, when Mr. Blackton had opened the furnace door and was actually about to throw the money on the smoldering coals, he relented and reluctantly pocketed it, reiterating the assertion that his partner was "a good fellу."

CHAPTER IV.

FALL OF THE CARDS.

BLACKTON loitered on the road to Denver. He seemed not altogether sure about what he wanted to do. He stopped a day at Grand Junction and renewed old acquaintances. Two days he lingered at Gunnison—this was in the old, narrow-gauge days, remember. He spied a friend on the platform at Salida and twenty-four hours more slipped by.

At Pueblo he got off the train and bought a newspaper from a vociferating urchin. He went back into the car and sat down, undecided whether to go on to Denver or stay over a train at Pueblo. He glanced idly over the columns of the Denver morning paper which he had bought and a staring display head caught his eye.

It was evidently the work of a headline artist and it told, in assorted type, of the disappearance of an English lady who had, with her husband, been stopping at the Grand Hotel. As he hurriedly skimmed the article, he saw that it referred to Mrs. Leven.

The circumstances of her disappearance were given at great length. She had last been seen early Thursday evening—the paper was a Saturday morning issue.

Her husband, the account said, had thought little of her absence at first, thinking that she had left the hotel to do some shopping, but as the evening wore on without her return, he became alarmed and set out to search for her. Failing to find her, the police were called in, but their efforts, too, were futile.

Mrs. Leven's jewelry was missing, a fact which, according to the police, showed that her disappearance was voluntary. Her husband maintained that she had either been murdered for the sake of her jewels, or that she had suddenly become mentally unbalanced and fled from some imaginary danger.

The corners of Mr. Blackton's mouth twitched as he read this last surmise.

Every means had been employed, the account continued, to learn the whereabouts of the missing woman. The railroad trains had been watched, telegrams had been sent in all directions, disreputable characters capable of robbing and murdering the unfortunate lady were gathered into the police stations—everything was done that experience could suggest or money pay for.

Mr. Leven's distress was vividly depicted. He declared, the account said, that the relations between himself and his wife had been most affectionate; they never had quarreled; she had had everything she wanted and there was no reason why she should have fled voluntarily.

Away down at the end of the two-column "story" was a paragraph, evidently written as an afterthought and considered of no importance:

> An absurd rumor connecting the name of a guest at the hotel with Mrs. Leven's disapperance has been set at rest—if any refutation were required—by the return of the gentleman in question from Cheyenne, where he has been attending to matters in connection with his cattle interests.

Mr. Blackton read this paragraph over three or four times and decided to go on to Denver.

When he reached that city his first proceeding was to exchange his well-

worn clothes for a modest but well-fitting ready-made suit and his next was to register at the hotel where the Levens were staying.

He heard little gossip respecting the woman's disappearance. The affair had already lost its freshness. He heard nothing at all of the maligned gentleman engaged in the cattle industry. When it became evident that he was to make little progress, for the time, at least, Mr. Blackton cast about him for some means of distraction.

NOW, as some people seek solace in art, others in books and yet others in dramatic representations, so Mr. Blackton's "particular vanity" was, as has hereinbefore been shown, the green cloth.

He was too much in earnest in his more serious purposes, however, to take any chances of failure for lack of money; so when he ascertained by casual inquiry the whereabouts of the nearest faro bank, he prudently deposited the bulk of his money in the hotel safe and sallied forth with only a small portion of his capital in his pocket.

Three games were running in the establishment to which he found his way. Two layouts were almost deserted, however, while around the third the crowd stood three deep. Toward this third table, Mr. Blackton, after a momentary survey of the gaming room, directed his steps.

As he approached, feeling in his pockets for some money, he discovered that, of the men around the table, but one was playing. It was one of those gambling duels between the bank and a courageous gamester, in which the bets are so heavy and the struggle so interesting that the smaller players retire from the game to watch the battle and give the contesting forces a clear field.

This sort of thing, even to the uninitiated, has a certain fascination, and to Mr. Blackton, who was a past master in the art of punting, it was in the highest degree attractive.

He pushed his way through the crowd, excusing himself with great politeness as he did so—for nowhere is courtesy, in language, at least, more scrupulously exacted than in a gambling house—and finally attained a position from which he could see the player who was "bucking the bank."

Catching sight of the man, Mr. Blackton involuntarily reached for his six-shooter. Then he pulled his hat down over his eyes and drew back. He still kept within reach of the table.

The dealer, a fat, stolid-looking fellow of thirty-five or forty, was in his shirt sleeves. He was apparently the most uninterested person in the room as he pushed the cards from the little silver box with an air of languid indifference that was in the highest degree professional. A handkerchief twisted into a sort of loose rope lay across his knees and, from time to time, he wiped his face with it.

Across the table, or layout, sat his opponent, apparently equaling the dealer in indifference. Light hair, closely cropped at the back and sides; a thin, blond mustache; light-gray eyes, with black points in the center; a long, straight nose; a square, heavy chin—rather a handsome man at first sight, but not so pleasant to look upon after closer inspection.

This man was losing—losing heavily—but bearing his losses with an imperturbability that extorted an occasional grunt of approval from even the dealer himself as he swept a heavy bet from the board and deposited it in the check rack at his right hand. There was no conversation; all interest was centered on the fall of the cards.

Mr. Blackton, still keeping his hand in his hip pocket, backed out of the throng, extricating himself so quietly as to excite no attention from the absorbed onlookers. He walked toward

a man who was sitting in a corner of the room smoking a cigar and staring into vacancy—unmistakably a dealer off duty.

"Who's that fellow stacking 'em up over there?" inquired Mr. Blackton, indicating by a gesture the game he had just left.

The man with the cigar yawned, stretched himself and replied:

"Jim Martin, cattleman, good, liberal player."

"Boards at the Grand when he's in town, doesn't he?"

"Think he does."

"I thought I saw him there early this evening," said Mr. Blackton, taking a cigar from his pocket and lighting it. "The reason I noticed him particularly was because I thought I saw him in Cheyenne yesterday. I'm from up that way."

"You're right about that, too," replied the listless man. "He has been to Cheyenne. heard him say so two or three times this evening."

"Thought I wasn't mistaken," said Mr. Blackton, puffing at his cigar. "Well, I'm doing no good here while this cattle gent is hoisting the ceiling; I think I'll go to bed. Good night."

"Night," replied the dealer off duty, resuming his stare at the opposite wall. "Drop in again."

CHAPTER V.

TRUTH WILL OUT.

THE young Englishman was packing his belongings the next morning when a card with the name "William Blackton" written upon it was handed to him. When the owner of the name followed the card into the room a few moments later, Leven did not invite him to take a seat.

"Are you a reporter or a detective?" he asked, as Mr. Blackton stood, somewhat ill at ease, near the door. "I seem to have no other visitors."

"I'm neither," replied Mr. Blackton. "Not to waste your time, I will tell you at once that I am not a mere intruder, either. May I ask if you've heard anything from your—from Mrs. Leven? I'll tell you later why I ask."

The younger man stopped abruptly in his work of gathering up some small articles and faced his visitor.

"Have you heard from her?" persisted Mr. Blackton. "I imagine from your manner that you have. I'm going to tell you presently why I'm sticking my nose into this business," he continued, lapsing into the language that had grown familiar to him of late years. "I'm going to do you a service, though you probably won't thank me for it; that cuts no figure, though."

A faint flush came into Leven's face.

"I don't know why you should intrude yourself upon me and interfere with my private affairs," he said. "Good morning," he concluded significantly, glancing toward the door and then turning to resume his packing.

MR. BLACKTON looked a little annoyed, but that was all.

"Well," he said, rising, "I can't find fault with you for resenting what really does look like a piece of impertinence. I thought I might be able to let you down a little easier if I found out in advance how the land lay. However, as you will not have it that way, I'll have to tell you why I'm so much interested in your misfortune—if you've a mind to call it that."

Leven turned and faced him.

"Well?" he said quietly.

"It's a rather awkward thing to tell you," began Mr. Blackton, with some embarrassment, "and, as I said, I didn't want to tell you if I could help it. But the fact is," he continued, pulling at his mustache, "you're not that woman's husband at all. Unfortunately I am!"

The younger man steadied himself by grasping the back of a chair.

"You say that you are her husband! Of course, you must realize that that is a most startling and extraordinary statement to my ears. Will you explain?"

"I will," said Mr. Blackton firmly. "Let me smoke? Thanks." He lighted his pipe and went on:

"That woman's name is Laura Harriet Blackton. My name is William Blackton. We were married in the city of Philadelphia in 1869. She is English by birth. She and her sister Annie, who greatly resembled her—a fact which you will do well to remember—lived in the same boarding house with me. Their father died soon after they came to America, leaving the girls alone and practically without resources. Laura made up her mind to marry me and did marry me. I happened to be the most available man and she married me as a matter of convenience, because I could support herself and her sister until she found some one that suited her better. I discovered this soon enough.

"The knowledge didn't worry me particularly either. She despised me and, as that sort of sentiment breeds a similar feeling, it was not long until I despised her. When she finally met the man who suited her better than I did, which happened less than a year after our marriage, she got rid of me in artistic style. I'll give her credit for being a thoroughly smart woman."

Mr. Blackton paused and puffed vigorously at his pipe.

"Go on," said Leven.

Mr. Blackton smiled in wry fashion.

"The next chapter of the story is not pleasant telling for me; that's why I stopped to take breath," he said, and once more he pulled silently at his pipe for a few moments.

"I held a position of considerable responsibility," he resumed. "The details wouldn't interest you. I was implicitly trusted and had the handling of money. One day my employer told me that I had been detected in a forgery. He was more grieved than angered and told me to return the money and go my way. He showed me proofs so strong that they actually startled me, innocent though I was. But there is no need to go into that. I had no such sum as was necessary to make good the forgery, even if I had been disposed to acknowledge guilt by doing so. My employer deemed me contumacious. I was arrested, tried and sent to State's prison."

The young Englishman shivered a little and drew back.

"I have spent the earnings of ten years in disproving the charge," said Mr. Blackton, noticing the movement, "and I have done so to the satisfaction of my former employer and of the governor of the State. That is small consolation for two years spent in prison, but it has been my one object in life.

"Now, then," he went on slowly, "you wonder why I should tell you all this. The reason is that I discovered, when I set out to clear my name, that the forgery for which I was convicted was committed either by my wife or by her male accomplice, with her assistance. There was a double play. They robbed my employers and got me safely into prison by the same act. You can understand how I sympathize with you in being made a dupe of that woman and her deviltry."

LEVEN looked bewildered, amazed, stunned.

"My—she has been known to me as Annie, not Laura," he said finally.

"Just so; she is a remarkably clever woman," replied Mr. Blackton, "and in Salt Lake City a week ago, for half an hour she actually fooled me into the belief that she was her sister. Let me finish. When I was released from prison I wanted to kill somebody, but when I made inquiries about my wife

I found that she had been deserted by the man—her accomplice—and had died soon after I was sent to prison. Her sister had returned to England."

"She died!" exclaimed Leven, mystified. "Then how——"

"Wait a bit. I was deceived—every one was deceived—into the belief that she had died. I know now that it was her sister that died and I have an idea that—this woman"—he hesitated what to call her—"may have made it easy for her sister to die. You understand?"

Leven winced.

"She was afraid of me, with good cause," Blackton continued. "If she was sure of anything in the world, it was that when I got out of prison I would get at the truth and go hunting for her. If she were dead, that would end it. She had no fancy for killing herself—but her sister resembled her—and, well, you understand. Perhaps Annie died a natural death. Whether she did or not, the game was so well played that, until a week ago, I had no idea that this woman was alive."

He paused. Leven's face was haggard.

"Yet you must realize," said the young Englishman, at last, "that I have only your word for all this. Consider how strange, how monstrous, it must sound to me——"

"I understand," returned Mr. Blackton. "You have only my word. You have only my word, too, for what happened in Salt Lake last week. Consider that I believed her dead—that for ten years I had no reason to believe otherwise. Consider, too, that she had gone to the length of cutting off a finger in order to perfect the resemblance to her sister——"

"It was crushed in the door of a railway carriage just before we started to the United States and had to be amputated," said Leven.

"That is a singular coincidence," admitted Mr. Blackton. "Just before you started for the United States? Do you mind telling me," he asked abruptly, "whether she favored this trip?"

A shadow crossed the young man's face.

"No," he replied half unwillingly, "she opposed it."

"And her finger was accidentally crushed just before you left? Hah! You know her hair is not naturally its present color, don't you?"

Leven rose from his chair, walked to the window and stood there a full minute, staring into vacancy. Mr. Blackton smoked on.

When the younger man turned from the window, his face was gray. His voice shook.

"Mr. Blackton," he said, "I cannot take your unsupported word—cannot—cannot! Don't you see? I must have other proof——"

He broke off abruptly. Mr. Blackton flushed and turned uneasily in his chair. He knocked the ashes from his pipe and took two or three turns across the floor, as if in indecision. At last he stopped, as one who has made up his mind.

"Well," he said, putting his hand on Leven's shoulder, "I'll have to tell you something that will convince you."

HE whispered in the younger man's ear and doubt, faint hope, changed to conviction as Leven listened.

"Steady, my boy, steady!" exclaimed Mr. Blackton, gripping him by the arm and helping him to a chair. "You're not the first man that's had this sort of a deal. You'll get over it. Consider that you have got rid of a devilish, dangerous woman. She's gone. Let her go and thank God that you're rid of her so easily!"

The words roused the other man.

"Yes, yes," he muttered; "she's gone—gone for good. See here," he continued dully, taking a letter from his pocket; "this was sent to me this morn-

ing—left by a messenger. She says she is gone for good, as you say."

"What reason does she give?" asked Mr. Blackton.

Leven was silent for a moment, then he said:

"I don't think that I ought to tell you the contents of the letter, Mr. Blackton; but this much I will say—that I might have been prepared for your coming by reading it, if my wits had not been astray through the worry I have undergone."

"I understand," said Mr. Blackton. "In fact, I think I can pretty nearly give you the substance of what she has written you. Let me see. She has been forced to leave you through fear of some one who has the power to bring accusations against her which she cannot refute, though innocent of any wrongdoing whatever. That's right so far?"

"Substantially so, yes," said Leven, with some surprise.

"She says that appearances may be against her, but declares herself guiltless and believes there may still be happy times for you together after she has disproved these slanders."

"No," interrupted Leven, "you are wrong; on the contrary, she says that I never will see her again."

"So," reflected Mr. Blackton, to himself, "she has found her affinity again in the nick of time."

"I hope," he said aloud, "you mean to humor her in that determination?"

Leven thought for a moment. "No," he said firmly, "I can't allow the matter to rest that way. After all, there is a bare possibility of some terrible mistake and if it should turn out——" He broke off abruptly. "May I ask you to give me your address, Mr. Blackton?" he asked.

Without a word, Mr. Blackton picked up from the table where it was lying the card with his name written upon it. He penciled an address.

"I can reach you by mail or telegraph at this address?" asked Leven.

"Yes, you can reach me there—*if I'm alive*. Life out in this country, you know," he went on, tapping the pencil on the table and speaking gravely, "is uncertain. People get killed here, and little is thought of it unless the circumstances are extraordinary. Shooting a horse thief or a man who steals your wife is thought to be justifiable. Other provocation is sometimes deemed insufficient.

"However," he said, smiling, and reaching for his hat as he rose to go, "I'm not likely to steal horses or cattle, much less anybody's wife. But life is uncertain. If I'm alive, you will hear of me at that address."

He walked toward the door. As he grasped the knob, Leven advanced to him and held out his hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Blackton!" he said. "I know you meant well in coming to me. That your errand was unpleasant was not your fault. It must be enough for you to know that I believe what you have told me and I hope that we shall soon make an end of this wretched story together. Till we meet again upon that errand, good-by!"

Mr. Blackton grasped the extended hand and shook it warmly.

"Yes, yes," he said, moved out of his usual composure, "we shall see the end of it, right enough—or at least I shall—and then you'll forget it all. These things are easier effaced when one is younger. You have ten years the advantage of me there. Good-by!"

An hour later he startled a Rhode Island jewelry drummer, who sat beside him in the hotel office, by bringing his fist down heavily on the arm of his chair and exclaiming:

"I will settle the business single-handed and save trouble for every one!"

The drummer hastily got up and moved away.

CHAPTER VI.

BEFORE DARKNESS.

IT was hot out in the sagebrush. The sun was well down in the west, but the plain had been inundated with heat all day and, what with the reflection from the ground and the potency still left in the slanting rays of the day god, the very air shimmered and quivered with the heat.

A prairie dog poked his head out of his hole and glanced quickly around, but popped back into his cooler subterranean quarters.

An insect hummed feebly, as if protesting against the oppressiveness of the atmosphere; but, for the most part, the great plateau, broken here and there by ragged gullies and abrupt upheavals of the earth, was silent and desolate.

High up in the air a buzzard sailed lazily in great circles, the only dark spot in the cloudless sky.

In the bed of an arroyo or dry watercourse, crouched against the western bank to gain shelter from the sun, lay a man, his flannel shirt unbuttoned at the neck and his coat and hat, beside him, partially concealing the barrel of a rifle.

He had lain there for two hours, rising now and then to look sharply down the wagon trail that showed dimly through the sagebrush.

A prairie rattlesnake squirmed sluggishly over the break of the ground opposite him and slid down into the gully. The man reached out and took hold of the gun by the barrel and made as if to kill the reptile. Then he thought better of it and allowed the snake to glide on unmolested.

He lay down again. The prairie dog once more appeared at the door of his house and, after three or four feints and dodges, seeing the man lie so quiet. boldly sat up and stared at him for fully five minutes, when a movement caused him to turn a somersault and disappear.

The man rose once more and looked down the trail, shading his eyes with his hand. This time he remained standing. Far away—four or five miles, perhaps—he could see a puff of dust. There was no wind. He knew that the dust must be caused by some one coming along the trail, some one not on foot.

He looked again, to assure himself that he was not mistaken, and then picked up his rifle, saw that the magazine was full of cartridges, gathered up his coat and hat and moved a little farther down the gully, where the bank was not so high.

Here the trail ran between the arroyo on one side and a steep, shelving bank on the other, leaving barely space for a wagon to pass.

Nearer and nearer came the dust and at last over a swell of the ground rattled a light ranch wagon, drawn by a span of buckskin ponies that trotted briskly along, utterly impervious to the heat, biting at each other when their driver allowed them to lapse into a walk.

A man, square of jaw and light of hair, his eyes gray, with black points in the center, held the reins. Beside him was a woman of twenty-five or thirty—handsome, brown haired, well preserved.

AS the ponies neared the narrow road passage, their driver checked them. At the same moment the man in the arroyo sprang up over the bank and, standing in the middle of the trail, blocked the way.

"Hands up!" he cried, leveling his rifle at the driver.

"Road agent, by thunder!" ejaculated that person, pulling at the lines to hold the ponies, which had begun to plunge.

"Hands up!" repeated the man with the rifle.

"Don't you see that I have to hold

the bronks. you idiot? Do you think I've four hands?" shouted the driver.

No coward, this fellow, evidently.

"Hold on, there!" he cried, as the woman beside him fainted and almost fell from the wagon. He transferred both reins to his right hand and supported the woman with his left arm.

"Ain't you ashamed to frighten a woman this way?" he went on, and he hurled a few curses at the man in the road. "I'll give you what money I've got if I can get the ponies to stand still. Hold the horses, darn you! You can keep me covered just the same."

"Get out of the wagon and lift the woman out," said the man in the road, taking one of the horses by the head. "I want to talk to you."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the driver. "I didn't recognize you as quickly as our friend here did. You've scared her, you see."

"Get out of the wagon!" came the command a second time.

The driver looked hard at the man in the road and considered a moment.

The other man, holding the horse by the bridle with his left hand, had tired of supporting the rifle with his right arm and the muzzle of the weapon was deflected toward the ground.

"Get out!" he repeated sharply for the third time.

As he spoke, the pony plunged viciously. It required all his strength to hold it.

The man in the wagon saw his opportunity. Quickly transferring both reins to his left hand, he seized the whip and lashed the ponies savagely, shouting to them at the same time. They reared and pawed the air.

The man in the road lost his grip on the bridle and tried to seize it again. The driver shouted and whipped and the horses dashed forward, almost trampling beneath their feet the other man, who sprang quickly aside, the hub of the wagon scraping him as it passed.

He staggered against the bank where he had fallen in the effort to escape the hoofs and wheels, but quickly recovered himself. Stepping into the middle of the road, he hesitated a moment. Then he leveled his rifle at the figure of the man still standing upright in the wagon, which was rattling recklessly down the trail, and fired.

The man wavered, reeled, loosened his grasp on the reins and pitched out headfirst into the road, the hind wheels of the wagon passing over him. The ponies, still further excited by the report of the gun, raced along to where the road curved to the left. In rounding the bend, the wagon slipped and flew outward, over and into the gully that skirted the road on the right.

The horses, by a convulsive spring, freed themselves of the vehicle and ran furiously onward. The overturned wagon lay in the bottom of the arroyo.

The man with the rifle walked to the place where the other man was lying face downward in the alkali dust. A hole in his back showed where the bullet from the rifle had hit him. It needed no close inspection to see that he was dead.

Laying down his rifle in the road, the man clambered down into the ravine and, with much labor and difficulty, righted the overturned wagon. Under it lay the woman, also dead, her neck broken in the fall. A tiny stream of crimson had started from a wound in her temple and ran down over her face.

It was nearly sundown. The man climbed to the road again and picked up his gun. As he stood there for a moment, looking toward the west, the waning light brought out strongly a reddish-purple scar on his cheek.

He threw his gun on his shoulder and started off at a swinging pace westward, leaving the dead man lying on his face in the road and the dead woman staring blankly at the sky from the bed of the dry watercourse.

The Black Blotch

By Howard R. Marsh

Author of "Where There Ain't No Regulations," "Phantom Fighters," Etc.

As the steamship *Oahu* sailed into Honolulu harbor, a woman's busy wits were at work picking the lock of a most baffling mystery; with what success she pursued her sleuthing, remains a secret with the American Army Headquarters at Hawaii, and with you, should you read this story.

MAN dead in room No. 247, sir." Dyrk Tuinstra, room steward on B deck of the steamship *Oahu,* made the announcement to his superior officer with all the composure he could command, which was very little. His big blue eyes bulged their horror; his round face was white and fear-graven. He was a rotund, simple-souled little fellow, to whom contact with death was a fearful thing.

"What's that?" demanded the purser, half rising from the desk at which he had been checking the baggage declarations against the passenger list. "What'd you say, Tuinstra?"

"There's a man dead in one of my rooms, sir. In room No. 247. A young man. An army man."

"The hell you say! Have you called the ship's doctor?"

"No, sir. I thought you'd want to know first. Besides, the doctor couldn't get in."

"Why not?"

"The key's tied in the door from the inside and I can't budge it. I tried to unlock the door this morning with my key when Captain Brant—that's the man's name, sir—when he didn't let me in with his breakfast. But I couldn't force the other key out."

"Has this"—Purser Clockhand glanced down at the passenger list—"Captain Edward Brant been sick long?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Not at all? Then why was he having his breakfast in his room?"

"I don't know. All the way across he hasn't left his room. At mealtimes I bring my tray of food and knock on the door like this—three times and twice." Steward Tuinstra rapped on the purser's desk. "Then Captain Brant opens the door just a crack to see me before he lets me in. He was very careful, sir."

"Careful!" repeated the purser. "I should say he was. Probably crazy. That's it, probably crazy and killed himself."

"I don't think so, sir. I think he was murdered."

"Murdered!" barked Purser Clockhand. "Why didn't you say so at first?" He whirled to his desk and took out a bunch of keys. "Get the ship's carpenter, Tuinstra, and bring him to the room. Room No. 247? We'll break in the door some way. No, wait a minute! What makes you think he was murdered?"

"When he didn't open the door, I went around to the porthole and looked in. Captain Brant was lying across the bed. It was all mussed up and there was a strong smell of chloroform coming out the porthole. He looked very white and dead, sir."

"Chloroform? Then maybe he isn't dead. It takes a big shot of chloroform to knock a man out. Hurry for the ship's carpenter. Have him bring tools for forcing the door. I'll meet you there after I report this to the captain. Make it as fast as you can."

DYRK TUINSTRA, still white of face and excited of eyes, raced from the purser's office to the crew's quarters for the carpenter while Purser Clockhand hurried up the companionway toward the bridge.

With wrecking bars and cold chisels the ship's carpenter worked desperately at the steel door of room No. 247 while Captain Sullivane and Purser Clockhand stood in the narrow steel corridor and urged him to greater speed. While they watched the frantic prying and hacking at the steel door, the two officers discussed what might have occurred inside the room.

"But I don't see how he could have been murdered!" insisted Captain Sullivane. "You said the steward reported the door was locked from the inside and the key tied in the lock. The porthole of the room is too small by half to let any one in. There you are! This is a solid steel-sided room with only two openings—the door and the porthole. No one could get in the door the way it was locked, that's certain, and no one could get in the porthole. The walls are thick steel sheets, riveted together. You can see for yourself what a job it is to try to break through. It couldn't possibly be done without arousing every one on the ship. And yet there's a man inside you think was murdered—— No, if he's dead, he must have killed himself."

"It looks that way," agreed Purser Clockhand. He was an obsequious, suave little fellow who made it a point to agree with the captain. He also always agreed with all the passengers and therefore was rated as an excellent purser.

"Has he any friends or relatives on board?" queried the captain.

"Not that I know of. Fact is, I never saw the man, that I remember. He was a secretive cuss. He must have been batty or else sick, hiding the way he did and having his meals served in his room."

"Maybe. And, on the other hand, maybe he had reasons for keeping hidden; perhaps he was afraid of—— No, I still believe it was suicide. But either murder or suicide, it's a devil of a mess! Isn't it always the way? Here we've had an easy trip across, no trouble of any sort. Then the morning we're due to dock at Honolulu, this thing comes up and slaps us. It's a hell

of a note, I say! It means investigation and probably tying us up in quarantine indefinitely."

"Almost in, too, aren't we?"

"Yes. Passed Koko Head twenty minutes ago. We'll be in quarantine before we get this fellow out of here, if that door doesn't give way soon."

"Maybe the man isn't dead," the purser remarked hopefully. "Chloroform, you know. Maybe when we get him out in the air, he'll revive. I've told the ship's doctor to be ready with stimulants. He's waiting on deck. I've got watchmen posted to keep all the passengers away from this deck. Fortunately most every one is lining up for vaccination inspection."

"Good!" Captain Sullivane declared. "Come on there, carpenter, a little more speed!"

Under the captain's eyes, the ship's carpenter was working frantically. Already he had warped the steel door enough to get the curved end of a wrecking iron on the frame. He pried and tugged with all his strength, but the steel didn't give. He labored and grunted and perspired—in vain. With an oath Captain Sullivane suddenly jammed his two hundred pounds of Irish muscle against the bar and the dapper little purser followed with his inconsequential strength. With a clatter and bang the door gave way, pitching the three men into room No. 247. Immediately they leaped to their feet, already fighting the deadly fumes and the uncanny fear of that steel-sided vault.

Sprawling limply on the bed was the figure of a tall, tanned man, clad only in pajamas. His arms were flung across the sheets; his eyes were shut and his mouth gaping. No breathing was perceptible. One pillow had been thrown or had fallen on the floor; the sheet close to the man's head was stained with a black, sticky blotch.

A "chloroform bomb"—a round ball of gauze with two uncorked bottles of chloroform reversed in the center of it—rested on the officer's chest, saturating the room with its sickish sweet odor. Across the room, an officer's field uniform was hung neatly over an iron chair. It had not been disturbed. Indeed, room No. 247, except for that grotesquely warped figure on the bed, seemed like any other of the rooms on B deck.

"The doctor, quick!" called Captain Sullivane, seizing the chloroform bomb and throwing it far out the porthole. It sailed over the rail and into the sea.

The ship's doctor, an officious little man who had been waiting on the deck, hustled into the room and to the bed. He raised one eyelid of the unconscious man and let it drop, shook his head, then fixed a stethoscope to his ears and applied it to the heart.

"Still alive," he said, after a moment's listening. "Almost gone, though. Get him out on deck."

"Out on deck, I should say!" said Captain Sullivane. "I've got to get out myself before this dope keels me over. I'm dizzy already. Come on! Heave-o!"

The captain, purser and doctor lifted the limp body from the bed, staggered down the corridor with it and turned to the right to the deck.

"Heavy fellow," grunted the little purser. "Dead weight."

"We'll see whether it's dead weight or not," announced the doctor. "Here! the deck chair. Now stand back, please, and let me work on him."

IMPELLED by a desire to investigate the mystery of Captain Brant's room, Captain Sullivane and Purser Clockhand left the unconscious army officer under the doctor's care on the deck and turned back to the narrow corridor leading to room No. 247.

"He may come around all right," remarked the purser. "Then he'll tell us what——"

"Hold up there!" shouted Captain Sullivane suddenly, leaping forward with an agility which his huge weight belied. "Hey there! Stop!"

Out of the door of room No. 247 ahead of them, a woman ran. Just a brief glimpse of her the two men had, a momentary impression of a slight, brown-garbed figure, a white oval face and brown hair. Then the woman whisked out of sight into a transverse passage. Her flight was so rapid that Captain Sullivane, in spite of his great pounding strides, failed to catch her.

He wheeled down the cross corridor after her, then stopped, staring in amazement. For a moment he was too surprised to think.

"Purser!" he called. "Quick!"

Purser Clockhand, who had stopped to see if any other marauder were in the room of Captain Brant, joined the captain.

"Where is she?" he demanded.

"In one of the rooms opening on this corridor. She must be. No chance to get farther. Call two of the stewards and put one on guard at each end. Then, by gad, we'll go down this hall room by room and find out who that woman was and what she wanted back there!"

"Yes, sir."

Purser Clockhand ran obediently down the hall and up the companionway, searching for stewards. When he returned with Tuinstra and a little white-coated Hawaiian a few minutes later, he found Captain Sullivane in earnest conversation with a young woman.

"But you're not going to leave!" Captain Sullivane was insisting. "I think you're the person we're looking for. Clockhand, is this our woman or isn't it?"

The purser stared in perplexity. The little woman in a white morning dress, who was stoutly demanding that the captain let her pass, might or might not be the woman who had whisked out of room No. 247. She was the same build, yes, but apparently much younger, scarcely more than a girl, and certainly different in dress.

"The woman we were looking for wore a brown dress," suggested the purser doubtfully.

"Brown!" The girl sniffed scornfully. "Well, go find the woman you want, then. I don't like brown. Now then, sir, let me pass or I'll report you to the owners."

"Listen, lady!" insisted the captain. "Don't take that high-and-mighty stand. It won't get you anywhere. You're the one we want and I'm sure of it."

"What do you want me for?"

The captain was nonplused. "Well —er—well—— Anyway, something has happened to Captain Brant and we think you're mixed up in it."

There flashed over the woman's face a fleeting expression of dismay. Just a lightning flash, too rapid for the two men to perceive, then it was gone, leaving her face placid.

"Captain Brant?" she repeated. "What happened to Captain Brant and who is he?"

"That's what we're trying to find out," returned Captain Sullivane. "Now then, lady, we'll accompany you to your room and look for that brown dress and the black bag you were carrying. No, not that green one you have now. Come along! If you won't come willingly, you'll come under force."

"If a brown dress is all you're looking for, come on."

THE woman turned down the corridor. Captain Sullivane, taught by experience, held tightly to her arm. At room No. 261 the woman stopped and fumbled for her key in the little green bag she carried. Purser Clockhand, polite as always, stepped forward with his master key and unlocked the door. The three stepped inside.

"If you don't mind, I'll sit down while you two gentlemen"—she emphasized the word bitterly—"search my room."

The two officers searched. Carefully they looked through every piece of luggage, in the chiffonier drawers, under the mattress, every possible place the dress and bag might be concealed. At last Captain Sullivane, red of face and chagrined, turned to the young woman who was sitting unconcernedly in a chair.

"I guess we made a mistake," he acknowledged apologetically. "We beg your pardon, miss——"

"Miss Bradshaw," the girl informed him.

"We're sorry for the trouble we caused you, Miss Bradshaw. You see, there's been a murder——"

"Murder?" she cut in quickly.

"Or near murder. That remains to be seen. You may go now. If we want you later for questioning——"

"Thank you, sir," the girl said sarcastically. "You're too kind. Will you please lock the door behind you?" She stalked from the room and down the corridor, very dignified in spite of her youth.

Behind her, very humble, followed Captain Sullivane and Purser Clockhand. At the end of the corridor the young woman stopped suddenly.

"I've forgotten my hand bag," she said, and turned back.

"Can't I get it for you?" The purser was the acme of politeness; more polite than usual, perhaps, because his faculties suddenly registered the beauty of the girl.

"No, thank you." The woman uttered the words scornfully, implying that she would not trust such a man with her hand bag or anything else.

"Keep your men on guard here, while you and I enter these rooms one at a time," Captain Sullivane ordered. "Understand, stewards, you are to let no one except Miss Bradshaw out of this corridor until you get my permission."

As the two officers entered the first room, the woman down the corridor, suddenly shifted her key from the lock of room No. 261, which it didn't fit, to the room next door. Hastily she stepped inside, seized a brown dress and stuffed it through the porthole to drop on the deserted deck outside. She hesitated a moment over an official-looking black bag, then opened it and removed from it a package of papers. She took her jaunty little green sport hat from her head and lined it with the papers and replaced it, pinning it carefully. The black bag went out of the porthole, after the brown dress.

One brief smile of triumph the girl permitted herself. She had tricked polite Purser Clockhand into opening the door of the wrong room and the two officials into searching it.

"Wonder who's the woman in No. 261 who had her bags searched?" she mused. "An involuntarily accommodating neighbor. Well, she has my green hand bag now, in payment. My, but men are simple! Particularly woman-smitten, polite men like the purser. Captain Brant, now——"

Her thoughts, whatever they were, made her frown. She shrugged her shoulders.

"There's a brown dress and a black bag out on deck," she reflected. "They've got to go overboard."

She stepped out into the corridor, slammed and locked the door of room No. 259 and sailed haughtily past the two searching officers and Steward Tuinstra.

SHE was on deck now. Shoreward loomed the brown mass of Diamond Head; beside it lay the white sugar-lump cubicle of the Moana Hotel and, beyond it, the square white buildings of Honolulu. Miniature doll

houses they seemed, rising from the verdant greenery of the island of Oahu.

With great interest the girl seemed to watch the unfolding panorama of the shore. Gradually she edged along the deck, the only passenger who had been allowed there. Now she was beside the little rumpled pile of brown dress with the black bag atop it. Quickly she stooped and picked them up, then, quick eyes darting right and left, she strode to the far side of the deck. Overboard went the incriminating articles into the green, swirling sea. For a moment they were visible on the surface, then were lost in the wake of the steamer.

Once more that strange, impersonal smile of triumph crossed the girl's face. She turned and walked rapidly around the deck to the place where the doctor was working over the limp figure of Captain Edward Brant.

THE eyes of Captain Brant flickered open; they closed again; he stirred, groaned, muttered incoherent words. Consciousness returned reluctantly. His large head with its shock of black hair lolled from side to side. The ship's doctor was using spirits of ammonia and brandy alternately, in attempts to dispel the coma.

Suddenly they took effect. Rationality returned to Captain Brant. His two hands clutched the sides of the deck chair; despite the restraining arms of the doctor, he forced himself to his feet. His eyes were wide now and anxious.

"Where am I?" he demanded. "Where's my stateroom? What happened?"

"You were sick," the doctor began soothingly, "and we brought you out here——"

"Sick, hell! Doped, of course. Quick! Let me back to my room! Which way?"

"Now, now, my good man——"

But Captain Brant broke away from the protesting doctor and turned into the companionway. Behind him, sputtering, threatening, wheedling, trotted the fussy little doctor. And from the stern sauntered a girl, clad in a white morning dress and wearing a green sport hat jauntily atop her head. Quite nonchalant she seemed, taking her morning stroll on deck. But her quick eyes followed the white-clad figure of Captain Brant.

The noise of the doctor's protests brought Captain Sullivane from the corridor where he had been searching rooms. He was surprised to see the pajama-clad army captain striding fiercely toward him with the ship's doctor in pursuit.

"Well, so you came out of it all right?" Sullivane asked inanely.

Captain Brant turned into room No. 247 without answering. Two long strides took him to the bedside. Feverishly he threw the second pillow on the floor, clawed frantically among the sheets. Finally he dropped on his knees and searched under the bed. When he arose his face was whiter than ever and his eyes were heavy with worry.

"I thought so!" he muttered. "Gone!"

"What's gone?" asked Captain Sullivane solicitously, stepping into the room.

"Get out of here and let me think!" barked Brant. "No! Wait a minute. Who broke down the door?"

"I did," Sullivane replied. "At least, I ordered it broken down. To get to you, sir. The steward reported you were dead in bed. Your key was tied in the door and it was the only way we——"

"Anything disturbed in my room?"

"No. That is, one pillow was on the floor and there was that black blotch on the bed."

"Yes, I saw it. Porthole open?"

"Yes. You left it open, Captain Brant, of course?"

"Partly. But no one could get in that way."

"That's what I said," declared Captain Sullivane. "But chloroform could."

"Chloroform, was it? That's what makes me so sick, I suppose. Where is it?"

"I threw it overboard. A cloth ball soaked in chloroform."

"Threw it overboard? That's fine," Captain Brant declared sarcastically. "You have destroyed the only clew we had!"

"Listen!" said Captain Sullivane, rising to his dignity. "I don't know what all this is about and I don't want to know. I am washing my hands of it right now. You seem well enough to take care of yourself. We're approaching quarantine and I must go up on the bridge, anyway. Good-by!"

"Maybe you're through with it and maybe not," Captain Brant asserted. "You've destroyed one clew. Can you suggest any others?"

"None. Oh, yes, Purser Clockhand and I saw a woman leaving your room when you were out on deck being revived."

"A woman? What'd she look like?"

"We only had a glimpse of her. She ran down the corridor and disappeared. I took the trouble of searching every room and, except for a Miss Bradshaw, who proved she wasn't the right one, I found no one.

"Miss Bradshaw!" repeated Captain Brant. "A young woman with large blue eyes, most guileless eyes, and a queer half smile?"

"Yes, the description fits her."

"Where is she now?"

"On deck somewhere."

CAPTAIN BRANT pulled on his clothes, then whirled out of the room and down the corridor. As he came on deck, he almost bumped into the young woman he was seeking. She stepped back with that cryptic smile on her face.

In no mood for gentle measures was Captain Brant. He seized the girl's arm.

"Come with me!" he ordered.

"Where and why?" she asked, smiling innocently.

"Where we can be alone. You know why." Captain Brant walked the girl rapidly down the deck.

"Is this a kidnaping?" she demanded.

"Maybe. At least we're going up on the prow, where we won't be disturbed."

"What fun!" the girl caroled, stealing a side glance at Captain Brant's set, white face.

Down through the steerage quarters and up again to the very prow of the boat, Captain Brant guided the girl. There, leaning over the rail above the swirling water which curled from the ship's bow, Captain Brant plunged desperately into his attack.

"Let me have my papers!" he ordered. He seized the girl's arms and whirled her toward him. "Where are they?"

"What papers?"

"Don't try any of that innocence stuff on me! I know you. I was warned about you before we left Los Angeles. Miss Bradshaw! Nice name, isn't it? Much safer than Helene Lamarque, particularly when Helene Lamarque is rather notorious in certain government circles."

"Notorious?" the girl asked quietly.

"Well, then, famous," Brant conceded. "Famous for her ability to find out secrets and sell them. Now, Miss Lamarque, I want those papers you stole. And I intend to get them." Captain Brant's hands closed tighter on the girl's wrists. "Tell me!"

"Cave-man stuff, what?" the girl asked. Her face, too, was white now. Her guileless blue eyes had suddenly hardened. "Captain Brant, that's not

the way to get anything from me. Never!"

"We'll see." Captain Brant clipped the words off with his teeth. "Miss Lamarque, if you don't tell me where those papers are, I'll throw you overboard!"

Suddenly, inexplicably, the girl laughed. It was a merry, wholehearted laugh. "I believe you would," she said. "Honestly, Edward Brant, you're ready for murder and I'm to be the innocent little victim. Please don't, cave man."

"No fooling," warned Brant. Already his arms had lifted the girl until she was standing on tiptoes. "I'll count five and then I'll whirl you overboard. Now tell me! One—two—three——" He began to count slowly, coldly.

"Captain, I haven't your papers. I wish I did have them. I'll admit that I came on board to get them from you. I'll admit that I tried. But I failed. Some one else has them."

"You're lying!"

"I'm not lying, captain. I'm willing to help you to get those papers, those very important papers, back again." She smiled. "You see, as long as some one else has them, I have no chance to steal them. If you get them back, I have a chance again. That's the reason I'm willing to help you. Besides, I've been watching you for two weeks and I've learned rather to like you—from a distance."

"I believe you're lying," repeated Captain Brant, but there was a note of doubt in his voice. His hands relaxed on the girl's wrists.

"You know better than that. You say you have heard of me, Captain Brant, know me. Have you ever heard that Helene Lamarque lied? No. She doesn't work that way. She uses her wits, yes, but after all"—she waved her white hands and shrugged her shoulders—"that's life, isn't it? The survival of the fittest. If I could have lured you into letting me have those military plans, if I could have purloined them, I would have done it.

THERE are certain powers," she went on, "who would pay me many thousands of dollars for just one glance at the new arrangement of those disappearing guns in the waters off from Pearl Harbor, for the blue prints of the submarine mines outside the port of Honolulu, for specifications on the new fortress. The attention of all the countries around the Pacific has been focused on the Hawaiian Islands, Captain Brant. Especially since the great sham war maneuvers over here. That was the reason I focused my attention on the same place. There were millions of dollars in discovering the military and naval plans of the United States in regard to the islands. I set out to discover them. I have trailed you from Washington, waiting my chance."

"I know you have," Captain Brant informed her. "You see, I have sources of information, also. That's one reason I stayed in my room. Your reputation, Miss Lamarque, is a formidable one."

"Please don't interrupt. I followed you aboard boat and have been waiting my chance ever since. As we neared Honolulu, I became more and more desperate. You never left your stateroom, Captain Brant. I could see my chances diminishing. This morning I——"

"Yes?"

"I found that you had been chloroformed. Of course I realized at once that other agents were at work."

"But you were the one who was in my room!" Captain Brant insisted.

"Yes, I was the one. I went pell-mell through all your possessions. Almost caught, I was, too. I had to throw a good brown dress and my portfolio overboard. But, after all, the ship's officers were very simple. By

the way, Captain Brant, I have certain valuable credentials in my hat now." She raised her hands to her head. "Do you wish to identify me by them before you take me into your confidence?"

"No, no! Not now. What did you find in my room?"

"A black blotch on the bed and nothing else."

"You swear to it?"

"If that does any good. No, I'll do more than that. I'll help you to recover those papers. I feel very sorry for you, Captain Brant. I told you I rather liked you. And this means the entire ruin of your army career, of course."

"To hell with my career!" cried Captain Brant. "It's the maps and the blue prints I want."

"Well, let's get them then," the girl advised. "We are anchoring now at quarantine. In two hours this boat will be docked and your last chance gone."

"But where will we begin?" Captain Brant asked helplessly.

"First, give me some information. Where were the papers hidden?"

"In a small, rolled portfolio under my pillow."

"Of course. Now, Captain Brant, it is evident that some one threw a chloroformed bomb onto your bed from the porthole. That's simple enough. But how could the papers have disappeared? No one could possibly have been in the room."

"That's what I can't figure," complained Captain Brant bitterly. "And yet we must find out. Absolutely must. We haven't much time, either. If the boat docks before we locate the thieves, we are lost. I'm trying to think, Miss Lamarque, trying hard. Maybe I'm still dopey, but I can't find any place to begin." He seized the girl's hands. "Tell me what to do!" he pleaded earnestly.

The girl smiled understandingly. Yes, she liked this earnest, impulsive young army officer who begged help from a former enemy.

"Don't worry," she encouraged him. "Go up to the wireless room and send a message to your superiors on the islands. Ask for help at the dock. Then join me in your room."

"But what are you going to do?" Captain Brant asked.

"Me? I'll investigate that black blotch on the bed. It seems the only clew we have."

WHEN Captain Edward Brant returned to his room from the wireless office, there was no sign of Miss Lamarque. For a few minutes he waited anxiously, then strode forward to the smoking room where all the men aboard the *Oahu* had been lined up to be inspected for vaccination by doctors and quarantine officials. Up and down the line he paced fiercely, peering into each face as if in some occult manner he would find the agent or agents who had stolen the internationally valuable plans.

Once or twice he was tempted to stop before some man, yank him from the line and throttle him into confessing that he had stolen the papers. Increasingly frantic Brant became as the line shortened. Soon the quarantine officials would be through their work, the *Oahu* would weigh anchor and a few minutes later be docked at Honolulu. Then truly all hope would be gone.

Out on deck he strode again, searching for Helene Lamarque. On her all his hope was pinned. In some manner she would find the criminals, must find them. But Helene Lamarque herself had disappeared.

Around and around the deck Captain Brant strode. His reflections were bitter. Not only had he ruined his own career, but he had failed his country. To him had been intrusted the most important military plans of the decade. All the way across the States, he had

been escorted by three secret-service men. Only when he was in his locked stateroom aboard the steamer had he been left on his own resources. Then, in the five days between Los Angeles and Honolulu, he had been chloroformed and his plans stolen in some mysterious manner. Soon he must face the accusing eyes of his superiors, confess his failure.

These thoughts, pounding through his head, increased the feverishness of Captain Brant's search for Helene Lamarque. Suddenly he met her on the port side, near the music room. She was talking earnestly with the purser, but turned as Captain Brant approached.

"Hello!" she called. "Fully recovered, captain? Excuse me please, purser, but Captain Brant wants to talk to me." She turned from the officer and joined Brant's rapid steps down the deck. Very boyish and young she seemed, as she took stride for stride with the officer. "Don't say anything yet," she whispered warningly. "I've just bribed the purser and he'll suspect we're trying to catch him at it."

"Bribed the purser?" asked Captain Brant, when the two had turned to the forward deck.

"Yes. Of all people, I sometimes think pursers are the easiest to bribe. Anyway, this one was. Fifty dollars did it."

"Did what?"

"Convinced him that it would do no harm if I carry my little dog off from the boat in a suit case."

"What does all this have to do with my plight?" Brant demanded impatiently.

"I told the purser," the girl resumed, unperturbed, "that it would be dreadful to leave my poor little dog in animal quarantine for a week. The poor, dear, little dog——"

"Don't talk nonsense. I don't give a whoop about your dog."

"Oh, but you will," promised Helene Lamarque. She seemed inexplicably cheerful. "You see, really it isn't my dog at all." The girl was serious again. "You will be met at the dock by sufficient men?" she asked.

"Heavens, yes!" Brant said glumly. "Probably a whole regiment of colonels, majors and captains. I told them in code what had happened and they're probably buzzing in from all parts of the island by this time."

"Probably," the girl agreed. "And maybe we can use some of them at the dock. Don't lose hope. We have one chance left. It may be a slim one. It rests with a little white spitz that will be smuggled ashore in my suit case."

"Suit case?" echoed Brant. "Now, what the devil——"

"Never mind, Captain Brant. I think you better leave me now and meet me at the gangplank. We must be the first ones off. I arranged that with the purser, too."

"I'll be there," promised Captain Brant. He was still far from cheerful. All his hope rested on this young girl with the guileless blue eyes and the girl's hope apparently rested on a little white dog. Not much to grow enthusiastic about, surely.

SLOWLY the *Oahu* sidled toward wharf No. 11. Excitement ran high on the ship and on the dock. Passengers crowded the rails and shouted down at the sea of faces below; orders were relayed hoarsely from officer to officer; on the promenade deck, the ship's orchestra blared out gay tunes.

Shouts, orders and music were echoed from the dock. The Royal Hawaiian Band, splendid in their white uniforms, played melodiously. Above the music rose the shrill welcoming voices of white-clad women and children and the bellowed salutations of men. Flower-and-paper leis were in

readiness to be cast over the heads of friends and relatives.

Honolulu was giving its usual enthusiastic welcome to new arrivals, making the incoming boat excuse for gala celebration.

Captain Brant and Helene Lamarque were the first passengers to land. As the two came down the stairs, a group of army officers on the dock pushed toward them.

"There are your friends," Miss Lamarque said. "Tell them to be ready."

At the foot of the movable stairs, the girl stopped. Captain Brant beside her. Quickly she opened the suit case and took from it a white spitz. The dog tried to leap from her grasp, but she crouched beside him, her hand holding its collar.

"Thank goodness he's muzzled!" she called to Captain Brant. "He's wild to be free, but he has some news to tell us first."

Anxious-faced army officers were crowding around the captain now, asking questions in low voices.

"Miss Lamarque has taken charge," Brant said tersely. "She asks us to wait."

PASSENGERS crowded down the temporary stairway, almost trampling the crouching girl and the impatient, eager dog. Beside the girl waited Captain Brant, gloomy-faced and discouraged, and behind him a group of mystified army officers. Suddenly the keen-eyed little dog leaped forward, tearing himself from Miss Lamarque's grasp. Through the crowd he ran and leaped frantically at a man who was hurrying away.

"There's our man!" called Helene Lamarque excitedly. "Grab him! Quick!"

Captain Brant bounded forward. Behind him followed the other army officers. Before he was aware what had happened, the hurrying man was being hustled along the dock in the center of a group of stalwart army officers. Virtually kidnaped, he was, but far too wise to offer resistance.

Later, Captain Edward Brant inquired at the room desk of the Moana Hotel for Miss Helene Lamarque. He turned away, disappointed, then came back.

"Have you a Miss Bradshaw registered?" he asked.

"Yes. Miss Bradshaw is in the dining room now."

There, seated at a side table, Captain Brant found Helene Lamarque. She was staring at the white serf of Waikiki Beach, the blue, blue water, and far out a group of Kanakas teaching *mahinas* to ride surf boards. Her big blue eyes were wide; she seemed dreamily absorbed in the beauty of the scene. Suddenly she looked up and saw the tall figure of Captain Brant standing at her table.

"May I sit down with you?" he asked.

"Surely. Oh, you found the papers, didn't you? I can tell by the expression of your face."

"Yes, we found them," Captain Brant declared happily. "The man had them in his pocket. We found them all. Every one!"

"And did you find the copies he had made?"

"The copies he had made?" Brant repeated.

"Why, yes! Of course he'd have copies. That's the first thing he'd do when they got into his possession. I think he'd sew them in the lining of his clothes. Gracious, you haven't let him go yet, have you?"

"No. He's in the commandant's office. We intend to put him in the guard house for a few days as a lesson. That's about all we can do to him without a public trial."

"Then you run out and telephone the commandant to search him again. Of

course he'd have copies. I know, captain, because his business is my business, you remember."

Obediently Captain Brant went to the lobby telephone.

"Miss Lamarque," he said, "I marvel increasingly at your keenness. They had already found the copies—rough sketches they were—just where you said they would be, in the lining of his clothes. Now tell me how you knew?"

"Knew what?"

"Oh, I can understand about the copies. As you say, you've had experience in the same business. But how in the world did you find the man?"

"Why not order luncheon and sit here and enjoy it with me? I don't suppose you've had anything to eat since yesterday."

"No," confessed Captain Brant. "I haven't cared to eat. But—here goes!"

"Now," said Helene Lamarque, "I'll tell you how simple the whole thing was. Remember that black blotch on the bed? About the only clew we had, it was, but a very good one at that. I knew right away it was printer's ink. There's an odor about printer's ink different from any other odor in the world. Newspaper men can tell you that, because they say that the smell of printer's ink gets into their blood and they can never get away from their occupation.

"It was perfectly obvious that no one—man, woman or child—could get into your room. Yet some one had entered it, and taken your portfolio. What? Why, a dog of course. Why a dog? Because dogs are often trained to pick up newspapers and bring them to their owners. You get the connection between the printer's ink on your bed and the stolen portfolio? The thief, unable to enter your room, first threw the chloroform bomb on your chest. Then he dropped his dog into the room and tried to have the dog take your portfolio.

"Can't you see that bright little spitz in there, rushing around the room aimlessly, yet trying to obey his master's orders? The poor animal couldn't find what his master wanted, of course. At last the man, desperate at his apparent failure, went up to the radio room, which is open all night, and managed to purloin some printer's ink. It's used on the boat, you know, to print the ship's daily newspaper.

"When he got that," Helene Lamarque went on, "the man returned to the porthole of your room and managed to throw some ink on your bed. That showed the dog where to go and accounts for the pillow's being pulled to the floor. I imagine the dog first tried to carry the pillow to his master, but was sent back. It wasn't rapid work, I think, but at last the man, with the aid of the ink, was able to show the dog what he wanted. Then the spitz brought your portfolio to the porthole and jumped up into his master's arms."

"It all sounds like the wildest surmise," Captain Brant said. "How you reasoned it out is beyond me."

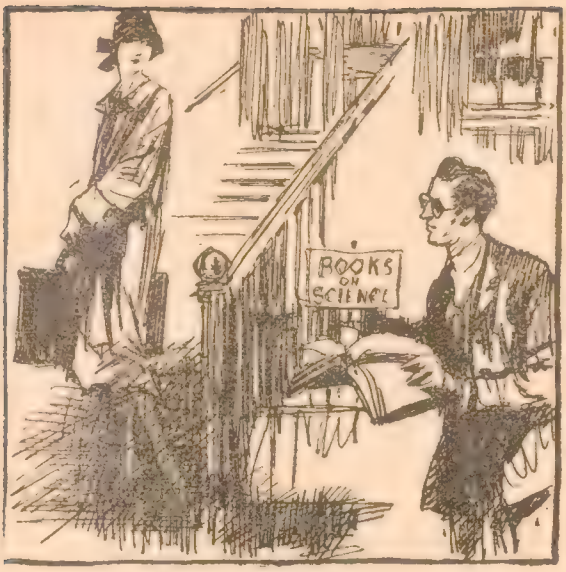
"The rest of it was easy," the girl pursued. "I went down to the forward hold where the dogs are kept and made friends with the caretaker. Then I found the particular dog which would retrieve newspapers. After bribing the purser to let me take the dog ashore—well, you saw the rest."

Captain Brant was silent for a moment.

"Miss Lamarque," he said, then, "I owe you a debt I can never repay. My country owes you a greater debt. I wish there were some way I could repay you——"

"Hush, hush!" ordered Helene Lamarque, reaching across and taking Captain Brant's hand. "Just go on being the honest, impulsive fellow you are and that'll be payment enough."

Captain Brant grinned assent.



At the Bottom of the Bag

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "The Auzanier Jewels," "Ever Since Pizarro," Etc.

Among the classics of Phineas Tutwiler's secondhand bookshop there were secrets belonging to all the ages of man; but there was also a secret involving the happiness and fortunes of living people.

A SUDDEN shower from a sky half cloudy and half filled with sunlight brought young Phineas Tutwiler out of his shop in a hurry. He was bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves. Cool raindrops pelted his solemn countenance and made tiny splashes on the lenses of his owlish spectacles. He scurried about at the task of dragging inside Ye Wayfarers' Booke Shoppe the tables packed with books which he kept out front for the populace to paw over and perhaps to buy.

He had the table of fifty-cent books half through the doorway when a young woman emerged from the rooming house above and, managing a violin case rather clumsily during the operation of raising a parasol, frowned at the rain and then paused to peer over the railing at the young man beneath.

She saw at once that he was in difficulties. The rain was wetting half the fifty-cent books and all the twenty-five centers. With a mysterious momentary flame in her eyes, as one who had a design and perceived an opportunity, she set the violin case in the dry doorway of the rooming house and hastened down to help young Mr. Tutwiler. As soon as she turned from the steps toward the basement bookshop and, unmindful of the rain, put down her parasol, Mr. Tutwiler perceived her intentions. He dropped everything to make a protest.

"Really, miss, you mustn't!" he said hurriedly, and in some confusion. "The rain—— Your hat, gown—— I—I

can manage the tables. Nice of you—really nice, thoughtful, but please don't mind these old books——"

Yet she did not heed his protest. She seized the other end of the table and, with a determined, businesslike air, commanded him with a look to pick up his end. He did so. They got the table inside. Oblivious to his running fire of remonstrance, she stepped outside and grasped one end of the twenty-five-cent table. Phineas followed suit and, with the books rescued from the deluge, the two young people faced each other in the shelter of Ye Wayfarers' Booke Shoppe.

"Nice of you, but you shouldn't have done it—really," he said lamely. "A few old books don't matter at all, I may very well say that your hat is far more important."

With deft motions as quick as sword play, she plucked off her small hat of blue straw, brushed the rain from her face and shook her head once. That shake created consternation in the heart of Phineas Tutwiler. He was a secret admirer of blond hair and the boyish bob. This young lady had both and the shake fluffed the hair and emphasized the charm of its hue and style. It was a tantalizing flourish, like bait dangled in clear water before the eyes of a fish.

PHINEAS TUTWILER certainly felt like a poor fish and again suffered poignant regret at his lack of a way with women. He was capable of thought, however, and, when a smile lit up an oval face and a pair of blue eyes, it occurred to Phineas Tutwiler that this young woman was as pretty as the sky had been when the shower broke—a sky of blue streaked with sunlight and the cool traceries of summer rain clouds. Mr. Tutwiler thought this, but it was utterly impossible that he should give utterance to it. But he did repeat something about the rain and her hat.

"Your books are no older than my hat," she assured him. Her smile performed numerous variations. "Don't mind my hat at all and please don't trouble to thank me. It was such a small thing, to help a man get his books in out of the rain."

Phineas Tutwiler, thin and rather meek and retiring, was suddenly stricken with one of those bold impulses which have fired men of all times in the presence of women.

"Nevertheless, I thank you," he said, "and—ah—if you won't think that I'm taking advantage of a kindly impulse, I should like to say that my name is Tutwiler and—and I should also like to inquire your name! I may very well say that I am eager to make your acquaintance."

There, it was said. Had any one told Phineas Tutwiler five minutes earlier that he could ever get up courage enough to speak in that fashion to the young woman he had noticed going in and out of the rooming house, he wouldn't have believed it. His fate hung suspended. Would she think him fresh and a man who had misunderstood? Her lips parted.

"Why, my name is Begonia Bell," she replied, with still another variation of her friendly smile, "and I'm sure it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mr. Tutwiler. Of course I've seen you around here, since you bought the shop from Mr. Gorm two weeks ago. Mr. Gorm and I were very good friends. I'm a music teacher, rather a poor one I'm afraid, as I haven't set New York ablaze with my art. I came here to play—violin—but my engagements have been few. I've taken a few pupils and I'm studying, but——"

She paused there and Phineas Tutwiler, delighted, felt that he must say something.

"I may very well say," he assured her, "that I think you must be a wonderful musician and a teacher, also. And your name, Begonia Bell—that's

wonderful, too. Yes, I may very well say that I have never heard a prettier name than Begonia Bell."

"Oh, now, Mr. Tutwiler, I'm afraid you're trying to say pleasant things. Of course you couldn't know that I'm anything at all as a musician, and——"

"No, really, Miss Bell, I may very well say that I make few mistakes in my opinions of people, and——"

But Miss Begonia Bell did not permit this to go on. She understood that this shy young man was unused to fancy speeches, that he was floundering. And still she had her object to achieve. She said:

"I've been intending to ask you, Mr. Tutwiler, if I might have the same privilege in your shop that I had when Mr. Gorm was here? He let me use his books whenever I cared to, and of course you know that the shop has a wonderful collection of books on music —many that can't be had at the library.

"Mr. Gorm bought the entire collection of Rilinsky—you know Rilinsky, of course—pianist, died a year ago, under very peculiar circumstances. Murdered, I'm quite sure—and the police are sure, too, but it is one of the unsolved mysteries of the city. His daughter, Anastasie, sold the collection to Mr. Gorm. And Mr. Gorm held it, because he hadn't brought any one up to the figure he wanted. I wonder if you have disposed of the Rilinsky lot, Mr. Tutwiler?"

"The Rilinsky Collection is still in the shop, Miss Bell, and you may draw on it at any time. I haven't sold a single book in the collection. It is just as Mr. Gorm left it."

"Thank you, Mr. Tutwiler! Why, I believe the shower is over! I have a pupil at three. I must run along. His mother scolds me if I'm a moment late."

They moved into the street. The stone steps mounting to what was called the first floor of the old house were at Mr. Tutwiler's back. Pedestrians in Bleecker Street looked relieved by the rain, as though a heat-fagged city had taken heart again. Sunlight filled the world, but the air for the moment was laden with cool moisture.

A little stream of water—at least Phineas thought it was water—found the edge of a step just then and trickled down on his head and shoulders. He stepped away hastily and brushed the moisture off his hair. It had been just a tiny rivulet and exhausted itself in a few seconds—a matter of no consequence——

"Good afternoon, Miss Bell! I——"

A strange scent was on his hand. He brought the palm up to his nostrils.

His hand smelled of whisky.

The young woman, too, had detected the scent. Alarm, confusion came into her countenance.

"Good day, Mr. Tutwiler! Sorry I have to hurry away."

She was up the steps in a twinkling, parasol in one hand and now the violin case in the other. Phineas looked at the case. It was dripping wet on the bottom, yet it had reposed during the shower inside the dry doorway. The scent of whisky was strong now.

INSTEAD of proceeding down the steps and on her way to her pupil, Miss Begonia Bell hastily reëntered the house. The door closed behind her.

Phineas Tutwiler hesitated only a few moments. He went up to the doorway of the rooming house. A puddle of liquid marked the resting place of the violin case. Rivulets ran away from this and down the steps in various directions. It had been one of these that had found its way to the edge of a step and thence to Mr. Tutwiler's head and shoulders. Phineas stooped and stuck a finger in the puddle. He sniffed at his finger.

It was whisky—Scotch whisky, if he remembered aright that sharp, smoky

aroma. He descended the steps and went into his bookshop.

Miss Begonia Bell had set the violin case down too precipitately on the tiles of the doorway. A bottle inside the case had broken. Had there been nothing but liquor in the case? Was this young woman not a music teacher at all, but a bootlegger, or a runner for some bootlegging ring? These surmises filled the heart of Phineas Tutwiler with sorrow. He had awakened rudely from a pleasant dream. He hoped that things wouldn't turn out that way, but he made up his mind that he would investigate this mystery.

At the end of ten minutes Begonia Bell reappeared on the steps, carrying the violin case. She stole a sidelong glance over the railing. She did not see Phineas Tutwiler, but he saw her. She hurried down the steps and away. Phineas stepped into the street.

Two heavily shouldered men of the bruiser-gangster type, both of whom Phineas Tutwiler had often seen loitering in the vicinity, were proceeding in the same direction as Miss Bell, one ten feet behind her, one twenty. It was just an idea—but Phineas Tutwiler asked himself if these men were following the girl. She turned a corner. The hulking, dangerous-looking men did likewise.

Phineas Tutwiler was a man of action. He was interested himself in things widely separated from the business of buying and selling secondhand books. He lived under a subterfuge himself. He had no desire to interfere with Begonia Bell's affairs, whatever they might be, but she had asked of him permission to take certain books out of his shop. As long as mystery had developed, might not it be wise to ascertain if some hidden design lay in this request?

And Phineas Tutwiler could not conceal even from himself that he had a keen interest in the young woman.

He went into his den at the rear of the shop. From a writing desk he took a slip of paper bearing the address of the old man from whom he had bought the bookshop two weeks previously. Mr. Gorm had retired to a sanitarium in the West. Within half an hour this telegram had been dispatched:

Is it all right for Miss Begonia Bell to have access to Rilinsky Collection? Understand you accorded that privilege. Wire yes or no and write information about party in question.

It was ten o'clock that night when the answer came. The girl had returned to the house at eight. She had been followed almost to the door by the men whom Phineas had noticed with extraordinary interest during the afternoon. The men had disappeared from the neighborhood after the girl entered the house. The telegram from Mr. Gorm read:

Never heard of Begonia Bell. Beware swindlers. Writing additional suggestions regarding Rilinsky Collection.

PHINEAS TUTWILER sat in front of his desk, lost in thought. He read and reread Mr. Gorm's telegram. This room at the rear of the bookshop was cut in half by curtains. Behind the curtains was his bed. One window looked into the yard from the den, another from the bedchamber. Just off the bedchamber was the bathroom, but the window in the bathroom was too small to admit any one with burglarious intentions. Phineas Tutwiler thought of such possibilities.

He had a reason. He had set himself up in business as a bookseller. That was what the public was supposed to know. But he had also set himself up as a counselor at crime. That is to say, this young man of a philosophical and bookish turn of mind craved adventure. He had long been an observer of the widespread conspiracy

against the prohibition amendment. He had heard and he had read of the fortunes being made in illicit liquor transactions. His enterprise grew out of a friendship he had formed with one Christopher Dolley.

Mr. Dolley looked like an advance agent for a circus, gaudy of dress, genial of disposition. He had been a green-goods man and a confidence man, but he had retired. This acquaintance, which had begun on a park bench, progressed to the point where Mr. Dolley had come through with financial backing. Phineas Tutwiler had turned out to be a young man with ideas calculated to appeal even to a shrewd retired swindler. He thought he could separate some of these whisky merchants from their ill-gotten gains.

What he had was a scientific outlook on human affairs. He applied reason and logic to all problems. Why couldn't bootleggers be tricked and circumvented by the same methods that crooks applied to take their toll from society at large? In other words, Mr. Dolley, through his understanding of the underworld and his sources of information from that quarter, was to send clients to Phineas Tutwiler—clients with problems they couldn't solve.

MEN of the shadows who visited Tutwiler must be engaged in a conspiracy against lawbreakers. Phineas had gently rebuked all suggestions that he assist crime in general. He would have nothing to do with that. If a burglar contemplated a raid on bootleggers or other lawbreakers, and such raids had come to be almost daily occurences, and if he couldn't quite fetch it off, he was invited to consult with Phineas Tutwiler.

Phineas Tutwiler had had one client—a burglar—and that client had obtained advice which enabled him to carry to success his raid on a bootlegger's hoard.

Christopher Dolley's judgment had been confirmed in one case. As Mr. Dolley put it:

"Tutwiler's a nut, but he's a clever nut. He's got the brains of a supercrook, only he's too honest to steal from everybody. If he wasn't honest, he'd be an international crook of big dimensions. He'd make a great detective, too—a scientific detective—one of them kind you read about in stories. This bootlegging business is new—no such thing when I was drifting around. The bootlegger don't belong with us fellows and he don't belong with honest folks, for he's more or less of a sneak and a hypocrite. An out-and-out crook admits he's a crook, when he's trapped—and he don't say he broke in a place because he don't believe in the laws against burglary.

"The bootlegger," he continued, "justifies his crookedness by saying the prohibition law is all wrong and he still tries to think of himself as an honest man. The crook is against the bootlegger. Well, now this fellow Tutwiler, who ain't a crook himself nor a bootlegger, is willing to put his brains to work trimming the bootleggers, as long as there ain't no violence about it. He's willing to cheat the cheaters—so if a crook wants help that way, there's his man—and a wise young man he is!"

So young Phineas Tutwiler had been thrown into contact with the underworld, without taking up its life. To what dangers might this not expose him? And what was there about the Rilinsky Collection that a young woman of fascinating personality—extremely fascinating indeed—should resort to false pretenses to get at it?

The presence in her violin case of a bottle of whisky was a trifling thing, but the two men who looked like thugs following her about the street was not a trifling matter at all. And now Tutwiler had a telegram from Mr. Gorm, branding the young woman as an im-

postor, at least to the extent of having claimed a friendship that did not exist.

The Rilinsky Collection assumed high importance because this young woman had told an untruth in order to gain access to it—and also because of the fact that its original owner had died under peculiar circumstances. He had been poisoned—the pianist—and had been found in a dying condition in his apartment. He hadn't been able to utter a word after that, though he tried hard to do so. Murder or suicide? It was still a mystery.

Rilinsky left very little money to his sole heir, a daughter twenty years old, Anastasie. She had been compelled to sell his books and his piano. Phineas Tutwiler knew all this, having heard i from Mr. Gorm. He did not know what had become of the daughter.

Mr. Gorm had bought the Rilinsky books for three thousand dollars. He had held them at five thousand and had advised Phineas Tutwiler to do likewise. The collection was still in the shop, well toward the back, and consisted of about fifty volumes. Phineas Tutwiler had studied it carefully earlier in the night. He was drawn to it again.

He got out of his chair. The back windows were up, for the night was hot, but undesirable entrance was guarded against by heavy iron bars. Phineas Tutwiler turned out the light in his den, then entered the bookshop.

He stood in the gloom in front of the shelves bearing the Rilinsky Collection. He reached upward for the electric bulb that he knew hung there. Panels of light from street lamps marked his front door and window. The figure of a woman was framed in the panel of the door. The young man's hand came down. He stood perfectly still.

THE visitor was the girl who called herself Begonia Bell. A suspicion that she might be trying to effect a surreptitious entrance was dispelled when she pressed the button that rang the bell in his den. He waited a few seconds, then pulled on the light over his head. He went to the front door and let the girl in.

"I'm an awful nuisance, am I not?" she said brightly. She wore no hat and she gave a brisk shake to her blond head.

"Not at all," he assured her. "I may very well say——"

"Just felt that I ought to have one of those books I mentioned this afternoon," she explained. "Studying, you know—and never thought a thing about it until I came to something I had to look up. Do you mind?"

"Not in the least. You will find them in the usual place."

Then Phineas Tutwiler learned that Begonia Bell did not know the location in the shop of the Rilinsky Collection. She hadn't ever inspected the collection, at least in the shop. It hadn't been moved since the days of Mr. Gorm.

Yet she evidently thought herself clever. It was too bad that such a fascinating girl should be up to a deception of some sort, if not something worse. She maneuvered, talking all the while, and thought that she had tricked Phineas Tutwiler into leading her to the Rilinsky Collection. He did it on purpose—to conceal the fact that his suspicions were aroused. She saw the books and seemed to know them at a glance.

"I'll take two or three, if you don't mind," she said, running her eyes over the range of titles.

"Help yourself, Miss Bell."

"Awfully nice of you. Mr. Gorm used to let me take as many as half a dozen. I don't keep them long. I make my notes and return them. I'll have these back in the morning."

"No hurry." He wondered what she would say if he flashed the telegram on her. "Take half a dozen, if you wish."

"Thank you! These four will do for to-night."

Phineas had debated the question of whether he ought to tell her that two dangerous-looking men seemed to be following her through the streets. He did not mention it. A certain idea had taken possession of him. She was a liquor agent, he believed, and these men were her guards. She knew about them.

They stood again at the front door.

"I suppose you were surprised," she said quickly, "at that broken bottle in my violin case this afternoon."

"No. I never——"

"The lady I visited—the mother of my pupil—wanted me to fetch her a bottle, as I happened to mention I knew where it could be bought. In a restaurant, you know. I don't drink myself, and——"

"I'm sure you don't," he said, as she paused.

"And I never did anything like that before—carry whisky. I shall never try it again either. It's—it's very dangerous."

Should he tell her of the two men? He decided against doing so. She was still deceiving him—the telegram from Gorm proved that. He must keep all his cards concealed until he got to the bottom of the mystery.

She was out and up the stairs to the rooming house, with four of the books from the Rilinsky Collection. Two of them were biographies of composers. The other two were operas.

Phineas Tutwiler slept.

In the morning he mapped out a plan of action. He was not a man who would sit idle and wait for the mystery to develop itself. He'd take a hand in it, crowd it along. It was an adventure. Perhaps—perhaps the girl would be revealed in a favorable light yet. Ah, that would be splendid! But it looked doubtful now.

Begonia Bell returned the four books and borrowed half a dozen more from the Rilinsky Collection.

The Rilinsky books were the center of this mystery.

DURING the day Phineas Tutwiler let it be known in the neighborhood that he intended to move into a hotel until the heat wave had passed. His bedchamber behind the shop was stuffy, he said. He mentioned this to the print-shop man and the delicatessen-store proprietor near by and to the landlady of the rooming house above. He told Begonia Bell of his intentions, too, and she rejoined with some trivial comment.

In the afternoon he sent his trunk away ostentatiously, so that any one who cared to could get a hint of his purpose. The two men who had followed Begonia Bell the day previously were loitering in Bleecker Street. They saw the trunk being carted off.

A little later Begonia Bell again started out with her violin case in hand. The two men fell in behind her.

Phineas Tutwiler locked his bookshop at six o'clock. He kept an appointment with Christopher Dolley. Mr. Dolley listened to the story of what had happened during the last twenty-four hours.

"I don't want any help in clearing this thing up," Phineas said, "as I may very well say that I shall do that myself. But I do wish—well, a bodyguard—two strong men. Something is going to happen in the bookshop. I am not afraid, but I may be physically unable to cope with the situation without—firearms. That is to be avoided. Two strong men can save me from violence and also make it unnecessary for me to employ violence. I may very well say that I like to do things as quietly as possible—and with the least possible harm to any one concerned."

He got the two strong men—and they came, at a word from Christopher Dolley, from their haunts in the shadows.

They were ready for anything, those fellows, yet they were jovial and friendly.

At ten o'clock that night Phineas Tutwiler and his two strong-armed protectors lurked in the gloom inside Ye Wayfarers' Booke Shoppe, waiting for something to happen.

It happened about two o'clock in the morning.

A man opened the front door with a key. Phineas Tutwiler didn't know that a key other than his own existed. This man was small, of the sneak-thief type, and he accomplished his entrance without the faintest sound. He closed the door. He proceeded absolutely noiselessly to the shelves whereon reposed the Rilinsky Collection. He worked there in the semigloom, glancing occasionally toward the door that was closed between the shop and the living quarters at the rear.

Evidently this man knew nothing about the proprietor's having moved into a hotel. He was watchful. Phineas wondered if he had made such a visit before. He could very well have done so while Phineas was asleep.

Phineas was close enough to the prowler to see what he did. The Rilinsky Collection occupied two shelves in that section. The man took a dozen books out of the collection, off the second shelf, without painstaking selection, it seemed. He began at a certain point and took the first dozen from that point on. From a small satchel he took an equal number of books and stuck them in the vacant space. They were books of various sizes, but so were the books he had removed and, when he had finished, that shelf was full, as it had been.

The six books borrowed by Begonia Bell had been taken from the shelf above and in a bunch, too. This removal of books without scattering selection, but in bunches, assumed importance.

FOR the first time the man seemed to notice the hole in the top shelf. He gazed at it, meditating. It apparently worried him, but he couldn't find the answer. He departed as he had come. The two strong-armed men sprang from their hiding places.

"Why didn't yuh signal us?" one demanded.

"I didn't need you."

"Gonna let 'im git away wit' yer books?"

"I think he'll be back—to-morrow night perhaps." Tutwiler thought a moment and added: "I don't wish to disturb him until I have learned his game."

"An' we ain't gonna beat nobody up?"

"No."

The two bullies grunted with disappointment.

"I'm sorry," Phineas told them. "I didn't know that things were going to take such a peaceable turn. I looked for something quite different. I may very well say—— You will receive your reward just the same and I may have something else for you to do—later. I won't keep you out any longer. Thank you! Good night."

He was also in the shop. He pulled the shades in front and turned on a light near the Rilinsky Collection. He made a close inspection, the first he had ever made, of those books. In his writing desk was a list of titles in the Rilinsky Collection, which Mr. Gorm had left with lists of three other valuable collections. Phineas Tutwiler ascertained that all but eighteen books of the Rilinsky lot were on hand. There were about that many books in it now whose titles were not in the list, but these, too, were books on music and musicians.

These had been put there so that the removal of a few books at a time would not be noticed. Some one evidently speculated on the probability that Phin-

eas Tutwiler had only a dealer's interest in that class of books. Unless a possible sale developed, he'd not discover so soon that some of the original collection had been removed.

It was not plain theft. It was part of a plot to conduct a systematic investigation of the Rilinsky Collection, not to steal it.

That was fairly plain. A burglar bent on stealing a valuable collection of books would take as many as he could bear away, not a mere dozen. He'd bring a confederate and make way with the entire collection.

The Rilinsky books—what was in them? Was not Begonia Bell conducting an examination? She had consent to take the books out. She did not have to come as a thief. But the prowler, who had come armed with a key——

And this man had put back other books from the original collection. It was not his first visit. When he first came, he left substitute volumes. On subsequent visits he had traded Rilinsky books for Rilinsky books.

Two separate forces were at work. Phineas Tutwiler had taken only one step in the solution of this mystery and, as so often happens, that step seemed to have led him into even darker ways. And the darker it got, the more tensely did it grip him.

He turned out the light, left the shop and walked thoughtfully to his hotel. He slept soundly for five hours.

Begonia Bell came in about ten in the morning, replaced the six books she had borrowed and took down the next six on that shelf.

She noticed that there were titles in the collection she hadn't observed before. Her slender figure straightened tensely, then trembled. She turned.

"Mr. Tutwiler, some one has been tampering with the Rilinsky Collection."

"Tampering with it?"

"Yes. There are books here that do not belong to it."

"You seem to be an authority on the Rilinsky Collection."

"I—I know the books. I told you how Mr. Gorm used to let me look them over."

"Yes, I know you did."

She looked at him sharply. Her next words came abruptly:

"What is the matter with you? You seem——"

"I was up late last night," he told her. "I had a caller."

"A caller? At your hotel? I believe you said you were going to a hotel to sleep."

"The caller visited me here."

She was trembling more violently.

"And did he say anything about the —these books?" she asked.

"He didn't say a word about anything," Phineas replied placidly. "You see, he didn't know that I was here."

Begonia Bell had recovered her composure. She stood there as straight as a reed now and her fists were closed—small white fists. She was making a mental appraisement of Phineas Tutwiler. When she spoke again, her voice was low and earnest:

"A thief, as I understand it. You seem to take it as a joke. Your suspicions are aroused, but you don't take it seriously. Have you stopped to think that you have here a collection of books that belonged to a man who was murdered—that these books may have some connection with the murder? And men who would kill the original owner might——"

"I have thought of all those things, Miss Bell," he assured her. "I may very well say that I have thought of nothing but the Rilinsky Collection since you first expressed an interest in it."

"What do you mean?"

"That it was you who first stirred my suspicions."

"The broken bottle of whisky in my violin case—did that make you suspicious of me?"

"That had something to do with it."

"And you have been watchful ever since—of me as well as others?"

"I have—and I have learned a great deal."

A tremor shook her again.

"Then," she suggested, "you should tell me everything you have learned."

He meditated. Their eyes did not separate.

"I am willing to trade information," he remarked.

It was her turn to meditate. She presently accepted this proposal with a sharp nod of her head. They went back into his den and sat down. The girl perched nervously on the edge of a straight chair. He sat comfortably in his easy desk chair.

THEY were interrupted a few times by custom in the shop front. At the end of two hours, they had reached some sort of agreement.

"Why—why, you're splendid!" the girl cried. "I wouldn't have thought it. I—I——"

Phineas Tutwiler's heart sang with happiness. He said gravely:

"You thought that I was as big a fool as I look."

She tried to assure him that such hadn't been her state of mind at all, but made a bad job of it, for it was exactly what she had thought.

Begonia Bell went away. Phineas Tutwiler saw no more of her until shortly after dark that evening. The two men whose business it was to shadow her had disappeared from Bleecker Street. She hastened from the rooming house to the door of Ye Wayfarers' Booke Shoppe. Phineas Tutwiler was waiting for her. They sat on chairs, in the bookshop, in the gloom—waiting.

"I think we should have had help," Begonia Bell insisted again. "It—it's so spooky here."

"Don't be alarmed," he told her. "It is much more satisfactory to do the thing without help. If we had others here, it wouldn't seem that we have accomplished anything at all. We have an advantage and, by remaining hidden, can take control of the situation at the proper moment."

"But they may come in force tonight!"

"I hope so. I may very well say that that is exactly what I want—all the game in one bag."

IT was a tedious wait, yet the mysterious prowler did a favor when he came this night an hour or so earlier. He came in exactly as he had the previous night, by turning his key noiselessly. He had a companion.

The companion was frightfully scared. A thing of this sort was not in his line. He was a tall man. He followed the other man through the semigloom.

They paused before the Rilinsky Collection. Each of these men had a grip. It was soon evident that they intended to carry away as many of the Rilinsky books as they could. They were stowing them away.

"Gentlemen, throw up your hands!"

They snapped into an erect attitude, hands instinctively up, to face the shadowy figure of Phineas Tutwiler. Behind their backs a woman's voice sounded:

"One move and I shall fire!"

They were hemmed in. The tall man was stricken with terror, which increased at sound of the voice behind. He was done for, that fellow, but not so the other. The smaller man sprang toward Phineas Tutwiler, evidently relying on the gloom to turn the situation.

The other continued to stand in his tracks, shaking.

Phineas Tutwiler struck with his pistol, using the butt end. It crashed against his assailant's forehead. The man sagged and fell against a row of shelves. His companion, terrorized by the pistol he knew pointed at his back, did not come to his assistance. Phineas leaped forward and struck again at his assailant.

He now had the prowler at his mercy, Tutwiler disarmed him, taking away a pistol that the man had pulled half out of his pocket. He covered the man still standing with hands raised. At a word from Phineas, Begonia Bell stepped forward and disarmed the second intruder.

"Now go for the police, please," Phineas said, to the girl.

The man on the floor sat up. Phineas herded the other fellow to a position where he could cover both with the pistols.

The police came—one policeman, then another.

"Burglary," said Phineas Tutwiler, "and perhaps something else."

"What's the something else?" a policeman demanded.

"Perhaps the solution of an old murder mystery—the Rilinsky case. This young woman here is Miss Anastasie Rilinsky. Do you recall the case?"

"I remember something about it—the name."

"I remember the case," the other policeman put in.

"This man who shakes so," said Phineas Tutwiler, "who is he, Miss Rilinsky?"

"He was my father's secretary," she replied, continuing to gaze directly at the prisoner. "His name is Rudolph Tralley. The other man—I don't know him at all."

"Perhaps," Phineas suggested, "his finger prints—this stranger's—will correspond with the mysterious prints found in your apartment after your father died."

"You better come along and explain things to the captain," a policeman ordered.

Phineas Tutwiler did not get to his hotel until eight o'clock in the morning. He slept soundly until two in the afternoon. He got to Ye Wayfarers' Booke Shoppe about three. He carried a copy of several evening newspapers, early-afternoon editions. Mr. Christopher Dolley, the retired swindler, waited for him on the sidewalk in front.

"Say," began Dolley, "I'd like to hear your story of this, only I don't want to be in there if the police come snooping around. How about it—are they coming here?"

"Not that I know of. I'm to go to the detective bureau at five. But why are you afraid of the police?"

"That's a nice question, ain't it? Don't you suppose they'll remember Chris Dolley? Do you want 'em to know you and me are friends?"

"They won't be here. If they do come, I'll hide you in back. Come in."

THE story that Christopher Dolley heard was this. It differed in respects to the newspaper versions, but not in essentials.

A year previously Rilinsky, the pianist, had been found in a dying condition in his apartment by his daughter. He was beyond the power of speech. She had returned unexpectedly and found him alone. The particular poison which was taking Rilinsky's life did not rob him of movement until the moment of death. He could write. The daughter, in the presence of her father's secretary, Rudolph Tralley, who came in a few seconds after the girl, managed to get Rilinsky to write on a sheet of paper:

First-word favorite No. 6——

That was all. He tried to speak, but couldn't. The power even to write left him at that moment. The doctor ar-

rived. Rilinsky died, pointing at Rudolph Tralley.

An investigation failed to incriminate Tralley. No motive could be discovered. No trace could be found of the purchase of the poison, which sometimes paralyzes the muscles of the throat in its first assault. No bottle which had contained the poison could be found and it required an autopsy to determine its nature. The feeble gestures which Rilinsky made in the direction of Tralley were not necessarily an accusation. The father may have wished to tell the girl to rely on Tralley for advice in the difficulties he felt she would encounter. Rilinsky left only a small sum of money.

Tralley was questioned, but never arrested. No motive, no evidence against him, except the pointing finger of a dying and delirious man. Tralley went his way unmolested. Some said murder, others suicide. Anastasie Rilinsky said murder. She set out herself to solve things—to find the answer to the half-finished message of her father. She was also under the necessity of earning a livelihood.

She got a few music pupils. She learned that Rudolph Tralley was traveling in shadowy company. She determined to invade the underworld and formed a connection with a bootlegging ring as an excuse for appearing in the haunts of that quarter. She could get nowhere in her quest for the meaning of the uncompleted message, just as detectives had got nowhere. Everything that had been a favorite of the father's was scanned—books, stories, music—and no answer found.

The idea of a book persisted. The collection had been sold to a bookshop in Bleecker Street. The girl moved into the house, only to find that the shop had been sold the day previously to a strange young man. She was under the necessity of concealing her real mission from the bootlegging ring, which provided two guards for her. She determined to employ a subterfuge in order to conduct a systematic examination of her father's books.

She was proceeding with the examination when it developed that others were doing this, too. She was certain that Tralley, cheated out of something by her unexpected appearance when her father was dying of poison, was behind this other inspection. She finally confided in Phineas Tutwiler and the trap was set.

THE finger prints of the crook captured with Tralley matched with the prints of the unknown man found in the apartment. Collusion between Tralley and that man was thus established. It was clear that they had poisoned Rilinsky and intended to search for something after he died, only to be defeated by the girl's return. Tralley's confederate and Tralley himself got out another door. The confederate vanished. Tralley returned.

The evidence against Tralley seemed circumstantially clear and tight, but no motive for the murder could be found.

"What did Tralley want?" Phineas Tutwilder proceeded. "I don't know. I am to visit the detective bureau at five. Miss Rilinsky is coming here at nine. We are going to conduct a search independently of the police. Would you like to be on hand, Mr. Dolley?"

"I certainly would!"

They searched for three hours or more and the nerves of all three were on edge. Every possible effort had been made to link the dying man's message with some word in one of the books. Page six, chapter six, line six, in books, and six wherever it occurred in music was studied. No solution of the message could be discovered.

"And now," said Phineas Tutwiler, in the droning, monotonous voice of one who has long been at work at the same task, "here is Verdi's 'La Travi-

ata,' a piano duet. It is a terribly long piece of music, and——"

"Oh," Anastasie Rilinsky, alias Begonia Bell, interrupted, "that used to be a favorite of mine when I was a very little girl! I could play parts of it very well—my father, wonderfully. We played together." She added thoughtfully: "I had almost forgotten that."

"Very well. I see it is divided into parts, into numbered parts. I am unfamiliar with music terms, but common sense tells me to turn to part six. The words I find are 'Scena ed Aria.' That means nothing to you, does it?"

"No, it doesn't."

"Now, Miss Bell—I can't help calling you that—please read these notes to me, as you have from other pieces."

She began slowly: "C, d, c, b, c, b, a, b, a, g——"

"Just a moment, please—there's a word. 'B, a, g.' It is the first combination of notes the letters of which form a perfect word. Bag! Now, among your father's effects is there a——"

She was on her feet. Christopher Dolley and Phineas Tutwiler were on their feet, too. It was the first break in the monotony of the night. She brushed a hand across her tired eyes.

"Bag," she repeated. "My father had a very old bag and a very fine one, too. A present from admirers when he started for Paris, to give his first concert away from home—from the little village in Russia. He treasured the bag."

"Where is it now?"

"In my room, upstairs. I could never part——"

"Is there a false bottom in the bag?"

"No—no, I don't think so."

"Would you get it, please?"

The girl returned in a few minutes with the bag, an old Continental bag of fine quality and workmanship, plastered with hotel labels. It turned out that the bag did have a false bottom. An examination disclosed that it had been fitted into the bag much later than the date of its presentation.

The false bottom was removed. The girl stood with one hand clasping her throat, lips apart. Christopher Dolley watched breathlessly.

Phineas Tutwiler took a sealed envelope out of the secret compartment and handed it to the young woman. She opened the letter with eager hands.

Phineas produced other objects from the bag. The letter and the objects themselves acted as a searchlight turned upon the latter phases of the mystery. The young woman read the letter aloud. Rilinsky had written:

"'On one of my early journeys on the Continent, while changing trains at Lille, I picked up a traveling case which did not belong to me, in mistake for my own. I proceeded to Paris and there, in a hotel, I discovered the mistake. The case contained jewels which I learned were worth about fifty thousand dollars. I employed a private detective in an endeavor to locate the owner of the jewels and I myself watched the newspapers. I wished to avoid publicity, fearing that some one would misunderstand. I——'"

"I know how he felt," Christopher Dolley put in. "There'd be some who'd say he stole the case and then got shaky and wanted to return it."

MISS RILINSKY and Phineas nodded, and the girl proceeded:

"'I did not anticipate the slightest trouble in locating the owner, for I thought that he assuredly would make his loss known. But not one word did I see in the newspapers—and I studied papers from Paris, Lille, Brussels, London, Berlin—all I could get hold of. I told the private detective to search thoroughly, feeling confident that the owner, when found, would gladly bear the expenses of such a search. My detective could not find where any report

of the loss had been made to the police of any important city. I decided——'"

"A thief," Phineas Tutwiler interjected. The young man had fallen into his habitually grave and attentive mood, standing quietly, fingers dovetailed across his belt. "Your father inadvertently picked up a traveling case that had been stolen."

"That is exactly what he says here," the girl agreed, continuing to read from the letter:

"'I decided that the jewels had been stolen, perhaps in some remote place. I advertised in a veiled way—advertisements which would be easily understood by the real owner of the jewels—in European newspapers and in American newspapers. All these efforts were unsuccessful. I spent close to ten thousand dollars and then gave up the search, contenting myself from time to time with private inquiries and with watching newspapers. Not one clew have I ever received. And——'"

"The jewels are yours," Christopher Dolley said to the girl. "He done everything he could. It's just like found money—if the owner don't claim it and prove title, it belongs to the finder. The jewels are yours—and they're beauties."

The entire collection, which included both set and unset stones, lay on the table. Three pairs of eyes studied them.

"That is something to be decided later," the young woman rejoined; and she read on:

"'And now so much time had elapsed that I was certain I would be misunderstood. I determined to keep the jewels, but of course to return them to their rightful owner if he was ever found.

"'Now, my dear daughter, you have more claim on these jewels than any known person. You are a girl of sound judgment. This letter, which you will read only in event of my death, is a true account. I leave the jewels and their disposition to you and I desire also to bequeath a warning. I do not know what Rudolph Tralley will do when I am gone. So long as I am living, I think he is absolutely trustworthy. He is the only person outside of a few private detectives to whom I ever told the story of the jewels. He might try to take advantage of your trustfulness and inexperience when you are left alone. I have him completely under my thumb—I mean, by that, that he is too timid a man to try any game on me. With me removed, he might. I shouldn't, if I were you, confide in him at all, nor let him know where the jewels are. He will——'"

"That was an error in judgment on the part of your father," Phineas Tutwiler remarked. "Tralley did try something—and he succeeded partly. He killed your father, but he didn't get the jewels."

"I always suspected that he killed my father," the girl returned; and went on with the letters:

"'He will have passed his usefulness in my affairs when I am gone. You will need him neither as an adviser nor an assistant in closing up my affairs. He has been well taken care of and he understands that his services are not required by you. Having this fear of Tralley—not fear, for he isn't a man who inspires fear—but suspicion, I am removing the jewels from their customary place and putting them where I do not think Tralley would ever look for them. The old bag would escape the attention of Tralley, if he searched for the jewels, and of course he knows nothing about the false bottom I have had put into it.

"'The bag is one of my treasures which I know you will always keep with you. It is the most highly prized souvenir of my career, for it was a token of the confidence my village held in me when I was young and struggling. I

am preparing code instructions for your guidance and this code will be left to you in such form as to be understood only by yourself. You and only you will understand the sentiment connected with it. As I write, I think of my little Anastasie sitting primly beside me at the piano—playing our favorite piece——' "

THE girl stopped reading, a catch in her throat, then went on:

" 'When you read this, you will have received the code and deciphered it—and don't you think it was wise for me to choose as a basis of it something understood only by ourselves? I will have left the code and a key clear to yourself in a place where you will be sure to find it. I am an eccentric old man—every one says so—and I choose to remain——' "

"I see it all now," Phineas Tutwiler interrupted gently. "I may very well say that it is all as clear as that largest diamond there on the table. Your father meant to point a certain way to the jewels. The murder prevented that. He never thought of Tralley's allying himself with a bolder man—some crook. The crook understood poison. They thought the jewels were in their former hiding place, wherever that may have been.

"They administered the poison, after trapping him alone in the apartment.

"While he was dying, they looked for the jewels—and did not find them. They hadn't proceeded far with their search when you returned to the apartment unexpectedly. Dying, with Tralley standing there beside him, your father tried to convey the code message and its key to you so that Tralley would get no hint of its meaning.

"Had he had the strength, he would have made it clear and he would also have left the information that he had been poisoned by Tralley and his confederate. As it turned out, you had only a few words to go on. 'First word favorite No. 6——' That was all. That was sufficient for us and it would have been sufficient for Tralley, if we hadn't checked him in his examination of your father's books. He was on the trail.

"I may very well say," Phineas Tutwiler added gravely, "that it fits up nicely—a set of circumstances that look dark for the slayers. Tralley realized that discovery of his plot to get the books would also reveal his motive for the murder. His crook confederate made a key for my front door. Well, Miss Bell—I think Begonia Bell is a wonderful name, even if it isn't your own—I think you should go to your room now and sleep. You are very tired. Mr. Dolley and myself will do whatever you suggest with the jewels to-night. We will guard them. To-morrow you should put them in a safe-deposit vault. I may very well say——"

Begonia Bell, as Phineas Tutwiler insisted on calling her, got the jewels left by her father. Phineas got a companion for the movies and concerts.

"I hope he don't get married," Christopher Dolley ruminated more than once after that. "He's too smart to waste his life that way. I hope he don't—but you never can tell."

Another story by Mr. Hinds will appear in an early issue of POPULAR.

A COMMON MISTAKE

Frequently, when a man goes around bragging that he's reached the top, he's just up a tree.

Ballads of The Drowsy East

By Berton Braley

HONOLULU

Where the blue horizon merges with the blue Pacific surges,
Where the trade wind's always blowing, cool and soft across the sky,
Where the tropic verdure reaches from the cliff tops to the beaches,
And the coral reefs are spouting with the salt spray tossing high;
Where the flowers bloom in masses through Oahu's mountain passes,
Where the sun and rain commingle in a warm and tender glee,
Where no hustlers push and shove you, where Aloha means, "I love you,"
Is the town of Honolulu, "sittin' pretty" by the sea.

Though your home be north of Bangor or in Gotham's strident clangor
You shall feel the pleasant languor of this "little lazy isle,"
You shall walk the streets unhurried and the cares that had you worried
Shall seem far away and petty as you linger for a while
In this happiest of places where the multifarious races
White and carefree Polynesian, Jap and Hindu and Chinee,
Throng the thoroughfares together in the scented Maytime weather
Of the town of Honolulu, "sittin' pretty" by the sea.

You shall feast on iced papaia, you shall even dare to try a
Little taste or two of taro—mashed and soured they call it "poi,"
It's a dish you will not care for, but the natives love it, therefore
It's a viand you must sample, simulating utter joy;
You shall dance beneath the "hau trees," intricately tangled bough trees,
You shall ride the white surf breaking "on the beach at Waikiki,"
You shall see the moon bow gleaming in the silver light that's streaming
Over peaceful Honolulu, "sittin' pretty" by the sea.

You shall hear the long waves drumming and the ukuleles strumming
And Hawaiian voices crooning in a plaintive strain and low,
And however far you travel, it's a spell that won't unravel,
And the thrall of it shall hold you and you'll long again to know
All the sweet and poignant rapture which you cannot quite recapture
Till old Diamond Head is rounded on your journey back, to be
Where no bleak winds ever fret you, where the warm rains scarcely wet you—
In the town of Honolulu, "sittin' pretty" by the sea.

By

CHARLES

NEVILLE

BUCK

Sandollar

CHAPTER I.

THUNDERING HOOFS.

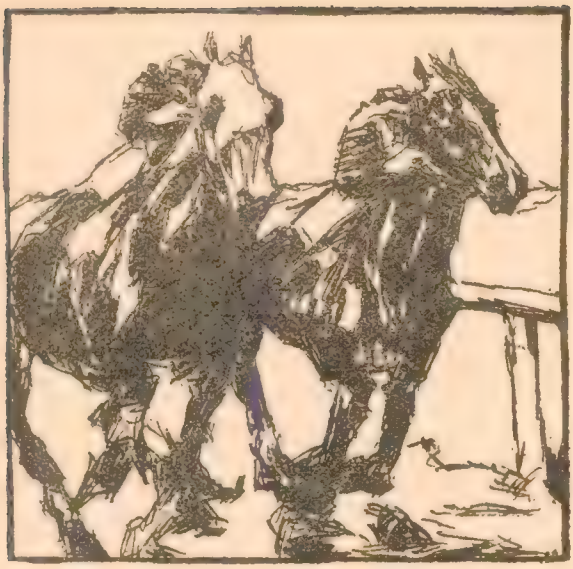
YEAR often slips into year, century merges into century with the almost imperceptibly slow current of a languid stream. But sometimes to-day breaks into to-morrow with the devastating violence of a tornado or an earthquake. The man who has been trying to remind himself that his shoe string, worn to the breaking point, must be replaced, or that the button on his overcoat needs resewing, awakes some morning to find the whole fabric of his life disrupted, or his family finds him dead—while the shoe lace still remains unbroken, or the button still clings to its frayed thread.

The sudden stillness that settled over the grand stand at Belmont Park, following startlingly on the shrieklike outcry which had prefaced it, indicated that this was such a moment of abruptness. It was not the bellow of supplication, or the roar of triumph which those stands so often echoed, while the thunder of hoofs drummed along the final sixteenth, or when the nose of a favorite flashed across the wire. It was ominously laden with the shock of consternation.

But that is running a few strides ahead of the narrative.

Young Martin Petrie, as he strolled along the clubhouse grounds letting his glance rove casually, wore the look of a half-mocking, half-impudent boldness in his somewhat engaging eyes. But it was a pleasant impudence, the impudence of youth and self-faith, and it was tempered by an inner friendliness for a world which he had so far found good.

The owner's badge in his buttonhole announced that one or more of the satin-coated thoroughbreds in the village of barns at Belmont Park ran in his colors and his air of prosperity asserted that he was not one of those shoe-string turfmen who are engaged in a constant struggle to meet their feed bills. It was a sparkling day with a breeze from the Sound that lifted the club colors and a sun which gave an illusory tinc-



Author of

"All the King's Horses,"

"The Rogue's Badge," Etc.

A colorful chapter from the history of the turf. In Four Parts—Part I.

ture of gold to the floating dust that hung along the roadways from town.

Something of that same breeziness and sunshine was also suggested in the vigorous figure and face of young Petrie. Then, as he strolled indolently along, his eyes fell on the girl he had met last night and they lighted to instant surprise and pleasure.

The leisurely gait quickened to precision. A moment later he was being introduced to the members of the party whom he had not met before.

"Here's your man, June Lee, come like an answer to prayer!" exclaimed a vivacious, gray-haired woman, as she pointed to the owner's badge. "He can expound to you all the lore of the turf." The speaker turned to the newcomer and added: "Mr. Petrie, none of us know enough about the racing game to satisfy this child's inordinate curiosity. We give her over into your hands."

Martin lifted his brows and there was a challenging upleap in his eyes.

"In that event, I must take up my responsibilities at once," he declared. "We are wasting time here just now. You must come with me, Miss Middleton, to the paddock and be introduced to the starters in the next race. In particular you must see the boys—including one who is perhaps the greatest jockey of all times."

June Lee Middleton nodded her bobbed head, and in her eyes was a quickened sparkle that seemed to recognize the light in his.

"That's not a bad idea," suggested Tom Burton, who, Martin had immediately decided, hovered unnecessarily close to the girl's elbow. "Let's all go along and be taught."

But the young man with the owner's badge shook his head and his eyes were decisive under their mockery of smile.

"Before the next race, Mr. Burton," he said, "I'll be glad to take you to the paddock alone. You see, I am an individual tutor, not a classroom teacher. It's my invariable rule to initiate only one candidate at a time. An equally invariable rule is: Women and children first."

Burton shrugged his shoulders and lighted a fresh cigarette, as he saw the pair turn toward the tree-shaded lawn at the back of the stand, where the starters for the next event were being led by grooms about tanbark ovals, across which fell a pleasantly shifting pattern of sun and shade.

"You're from the South, aren't you?" asked Martin. "Last night I didn't have a chance to say a dozen words to you. You were altogether too popular—but I had met you and I meant that it shouldn't be the last time, by several scores and hundreds."

"How do you know I'm from the South?" she inquired, with a studied artlessness.

He broke into a peal of laughter.

"If you'd been up North long, you wouldn't have to put that question," he assured her. "You'd recognize the Southern voice whenever and wherever you heard it. One knows the mocking bird comes from the South, doesn't he?"

"I'm from South Carolina," she admitted briefly. "But I'm here now for good. I live in the Village—close to Washington Square."

His eyes met hers directly and held them.

"I was wondering where you had been all my life," he made audacious announcement. "I've missed you damnably."

To herself the girl made reflection, while her own gray-blue eyes were as cryptic as those of the Mona Lisa: "This one thinks he's a lady-killer. It's just possible that a little taming will be good for his soul."

"You don't waste time unduly, do you?" she inquired quietly.

"More races are won by a quick break than by getting left at the post," he made brazen response. "I try to get a step at the gate when they spring the barrier—if the stake is worth it. You see, I'm seeking to instruct you in the principles of the turf."

"But we aren't horses, you know."

"There are things horses can teach us. Suppose we go so far as to admit that we are thoroughbreds!"

She pretended to be looking at a woman's costume, but in reality she averted her head to hide the twinkle in her eyes.

"Oh, very well," she mused to herself. "If you will rush on your fate—the risk is your own." But, aloud, she made no answer.

"Half the race is in the start," Petrie went on. Then he broke off suddenly to say in a changed tone: "But here we are among the horses and our first lesson begins."

"Oh!" she exclaimed rapturously, as a splendid pair of colts, one a chestnut burnished like bronze and one a black like polished ebony, were led slowly by her. "Oh, the beauty of them! The sheer power and grace of them!"

HE nodded his head and now the impudence had left his face, leaving it quietly enthusiastic.

"They're the most beautiful and the most perishable toys that ever a man played with," he assured her, "and, except for gamecocks, no living creature has finer courage. Those two are from Jerry Knott's barn—and he has named them well. They are Running Noose, by Turk's Head, out of Granny, and Slipknot, by the same sire, out of Half Hitch."

"And that one," she exclaimed, as a blood bay came by on dancing feet, his great flanks quivering with eagerness, "is even lovelier! His coat throws back the sunlight like red gold. Is it permitted a worshiper to touch his velvet nose?"

The young man smiled. He nodded to the negro groom, who stopped with the walking horse and showed his own strong teeth in a wide grin.

"In this case, it's permitted," Petrie told his companion. "The colt happens

to be mine and both he and I are inordinately flattered. He's Breadwinner by name—but there's the saddling bugle. I've a friend I want you to meet in a few minutes."

The work—almost a ceremonial—of adjusting the numbered cloths, the crocheted shoulder pads and the absurdly small saddles was gone swiftly through with. Cinches were tested, bridles examined and then another fanfare of the trumpet called, through the scattered groups of onlookers, the boys in bright silks and caps who were to ride.

Some of these were like human monkeys, midgets with wizened faces, old beyond their stature. A few had the deceptive appearance of bigness that their weights belied and one, a clear-eyed lad in a sky-blue cap and jacket, cross with white bands, halted by the stirrup of Breadwinner. He nodded to Petrie and gravely Petrie said:

"Miss Middleton, I want to introduce Mr. Rockwell."

The girl put out her hand and the jockey took it with as little embarrassment as if they had met in a drawing-room. Then he was giving his foot to the stable's trainer and was being tossed to the saddle, where he gathered and knotted his reins, bending over to listen to his final instructions.

AS the horses were being led out, with the crowd following, Martin took the girl's elbow and began guiding her back toward the place where he had met her, talking in a low voice as they went.

"I'm not going to apologize for presenting a jockey—even to you," he said, "because that boy is a king in his own world. Of course, he's not my regular stable jockey. It would take much more money than my whole income to pay his contract salary. He earns more than a good many bank presidents, but he can take outside mounts when his own connections have no starters. Sometimes he rides for me."

"You say," prompted the girl with an eager interest, "that he is a king in his own world? Tell me something more about it—and him."

"The roster of truly great jockeys," he told her, "is a short one, when one considers the large number of boys that sport racing silks year in and year out on all the tracks of the world. Through generations, I expect you might count them on the fingers of both hands. Fred Archer, 'Snapper' Garrison, Tod Sloan, Miller, Loftus and the rest."

"And this young man—Mr. Rockwell—is in that class?"

Petrie smiled.

"Some pretty hard-boiled horsemen would tell you," he replied, "that, if all the dead celebrities of the turf could be called back to life, just as they stood in boots and silks at the prime of their careers, and if they could all be mounted on horses of precise equality, Jimmy Rockwell would outride them all. If such a miracle race could provide a supreme trial of a jockey's judgment, cunning and courage, an acid test of his ability to break at the barrier, to rate his mount and think clear in the welter of conflict, to ride a desperate finish, these men would gamble their last dollar on Jimmy Rockwell to come home ahead of his greatest predecessors—and make monkeys of all his contemporaries."

"Why, then," she demanded innocently, "doesn't he win every race?"

"Because, fortunately for the chances of the sport," he answered, "no man can ride a horse much faster than that horse can run. Just the same, a good many race followers make it a practice to play Rockwell's mounts, regardless of whether those mounts stand at the top or the bottom of the form."

"Will he win this race for you?" she asked, and he shook his head dubiously.

"He will, if anybody could, but

Breadwinner is temperamental. Sometimes he belies his name."

"Is there time for me to make a bet? How is it done?" demanded June Lee, with a sudden, febrile excitement in her eyes.

Again the man shook his head.

"There's always time until they reach the post," he told her. "But I hope you won't. I'd rather you didn't have your first impression of the game spoiled by a possible loss. Suppose you just watch this event without playing it."

She nodded reluctant acquiescence. They went back again to the lawn, as the colts and fillies paraded to the barrier for a mile race.

As the line of nine starters came through the paddock gate, flaunting their variegation of colors like an old-fashioned flower bed behind the red coat of the marshal on his piebald pony, the girl's heart gave a wild little thump. She recognized, in his sky-blue jacket with white cross sashes, the jockey whom she had heard so highly eulogized and with whom she had shaken hands. Within her pulses stirred a new emotion, like the exciting effervescence of champagne.

THIS matter of racing horses, which had been until to-day an affair of personal unconcern, had now laid upon her interests the first glamour of its spell. There went a horse whose nose had nuzzled affectionately at her shoulder, ridden by a boy she had met —a boy who was proclaimed a king among his own kind—and into an abstract proposition had entered the personal equation.

It was all rather bewildering to her —the confusion at the post; the fretful milling and kicking of horses that refused to line up; the activities of the assistant starters, hanging to bit rings and lashing out with long whips—but she watched it eagerly through Martin's glasses.

Then at last they were straightened out and, even had she not seen the bursting eruption of colored silks and the launched mass of straining horseflesh, she would have known by the shout which went up that it was a start. As yet she could make little of it. It was all too fast and jumbled for her untrained eye to follow intelligently. She thought it would be as easy to keep track of the speed and relative positions of multicolored stars shot from one rocket. But she heard Petrie mutter, "Pinched off!" and saw him shrug his shoulder with a somewhat disconsolate fatalism.

What June Lee saw was a flying confusion, starting over there at the head of the chute, where the barrier was sprung for mile events on this mile-and-a-half course. Resolutely she followed that flying confusion with the glasses that brought it all closer.

At first it was a jumble, tightly bunched—but at once it began to string out, and it was then that she recognized again the set of colors which, alone, held her interests. And despair fell on her as she saw that, instead of being a banner of blue and white at the forefront, it was a banner trailing mournfully in the ruck.

Martin Petrie held no binoculars to his eyes. He needed none, yet to his unaided sight there was no confusion. Rockwell had broken admirably from a poor position and had hustled Breadwinner out in the effort to gain clear running, but Breadwinner had hung sluggishly back for the fraction of a section. In that fraction of a second, the horse had been pocketed and crowded to the rail with his front obstructed. He had thrown away his chance. He had in him, Petrie knew, the speed and stamina to master his disadvantage, should there open before him a space wide enough to let him through. But would such a space open?

Over there, in the drumming of three

dozen hoofs mounting to a low thunder, in the rising smokelike dust and in the sharp snapping of wind-whipped silks, Jimmy Rockwell, holding Breadwinner well in hand, with one knee almost brushing the rail and the other knee touched by that of a fellow rider, was thinking as quickly and as unexcitedly as though his saddle were a swivel chair.

That laggard instant, when the colt under him had let the others outbreak him, would carry the penalty of sure defeat, unless he could, by sheer genius of his jockeying, snatch success out of failure. Except that his thought processes were timed in the measurement of the split-second watch, Rockwell was weighing his problem as coolly as a master of industry might weigh a promotion scheme.

Two courses lay open to him. One was to pull back, losing several precious lengths until he found himself clear of interference. Then he might take the long overland course on the outside, hoping to pick up and pass the leaders in the stretch. But Breadwinner was not a colt which could be so taken back with any certainty that he would respond with his best when called upon to come forward again. Under the punishment, so inflicted, he might sulk.

There was one other hope and on it Jimmy Rockwell relied. There was about half a mile of straight going before the first turn was reached. If he could push his mount through a providential gap or two in that straight lane, still hugging the rail, and if the leaders bore out on either the first or second turn, he might drive Breadwinner through to a challenging position and, by dint of one of his unrivaled finish rides, get up in time for victory.

That was the bold and the dangerous course. The openings upon which he must depend would be narrow and they might squeeze in treacherously before he won through. That would mean that Breadwinner—and others—must go down in a heap, to broken bones.

Jimmy Rockwell crouched low over the withers of his mount and closed up on the horse at his front, seeking gradually to force outward the other horse at his side. Abruptly a gap opened. Was it wide enough? That must be tested. It was either sufficient or insufficient by the matter of an inch or two.

The reins shifted from two hands to one. The tufted whip rose and fell in a single stroke, perfectly timed to the stride. Breadwinner shot forward like a car with a foot pushed down on its accelerator. He was out of the first pocket only to be tightly sewed up in a second, but now he was one step nearer freedom from his chancery.

Then came the first turn. Five horses still headed him on the journey home; three trailed him. The five raced around the far turn hugging the inside. Rockwell's boot scraped the fence. On the home turn, one colt bore out a bit wide, carrying others with him. Into the vacancy they left on the rail shot a bronze phantom over whose shoulders lay a low-crouched shape of sky blue and white. The phantom was fourth now and coming like a hurricane down the stretch, with a way clear before him along the rail. A great shout arose:

"Come on, Rockwell!"

But still at his front and on the outside sped a chestnut, under a manikin in cherry and black. The manikin cast an anxious glance backward over his shoulder and saw the menace of the sky-blue and white. The manikin's bat rose and fell. He cut across the track toward the inside to choke off and block the way of that fast-closing rival—and cut too sharp.

THEN it was that the dismayed shout went up.

From Martin Petrie, whose eyes were educated to construe such sights, broke a low exclamation.

Then there was a smother of dust and a seeming of soundless explosion. The chestnut under the black-and-cherry jacket smashed into the bay under the sky-blue and white. Both horses went down, plowing the earth of the track, while on top of them piled the two horses that were driving hard at their heels.

Clear of its saddle, out of the welter, hurtled a scrap of sky-blue to fall limp and lie, unmoving, twenty feet ahead of the writhing snarl compounded of four horses and three boys. The three hindmost horses of the field seemed to be sweeping over and trampling the scrap of blue as they passed.

The two front runners that had not gone down pelted along the stretch, the bats of their jockeys rising and falling stride for stride. Three horses struggled to their feet and began galloping about, riderless. A fourth came up, too, but stumbled again to his knees and rose painfully, floundering on a broken leg.

The four boys, no longer obscured by screening horseflesh, lay as still as though they had never known life. While the judges kept steadfast eyes on the wire, as their duty required, other gazes forgot the decision to remain straining toward the spot where the casualties lay. Mounted policemen were galloping from the infield to that spot and an ambulance was already speeding from the paddock gate. June Lee did not see the finish.

CHAPTER II.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

JUNE LEE turned a paled face toward the young man at her side to find his own face momentarily drawn and pallid. Then she heard him say in a voice of almost toneless quiet:

"I must go out there. Breadwinner will have to be destroyed."

The words came with a rather sickening shock and they seemed to her to savor of brutality. Her eye had not, as had that of the owner, gauged the mortal nature of the horse's hurt and she seemed to see the colt again as he had been a few minutes ago there under the great trees of the paddock, so full of life and power that one could not reconcile with him the thought of death.

She visualized him again, walking on dancing, delicate feet, brimming with vitality and strength that swept in ripples under the sheen of his satin coat. It had been so short a while ago that he had been so—his eyes alert and gentle; his nostrils wide and eager; his nerves quivering in anticipation of contest. She closed her eyes and seemed to see afresh the boy being tossed to his saddle, as keen of eye and body as the horse.

Now, one was floundering in helpless agony; the other was being hurried away, apparently lifeless, to the jockey room.

Martin Petrie had begun to speak again and now his words came with the imperative snap of action.

"Gentlemen," he said to the men of the group, "may I trouble one of you to meet me at the jockey-house entrance in a few minutes? The boy doesn't need me at the moment—the horse does. But I must be on hand to see to Rockwell, too, and I may want some one to attend to telephoning and telegraphing—I hardly know what. He was riding my colt."

"I'll be there," declared Burton promptly, and, as Breadwinner's owner turned and went away with a rapid stride toward the track gate, he heard the girl announce:

"I'll be there, too."

Yet she did not go at once. For a little while something held her gripping the rail of the fence, watching the young man as he hurried to the place where a track attendant held the reins of the

horse that had run its last race. Two other figures were also hurrying that way and, in one of them, she recognized the trainer who had lifted Rockwell to his saddle.

The other was a mounted policeman who was now on foot and, though the officer assumed a casual air, he was loosening his long coat. She shivered a little as premonition told her that he was making ready to reach for the holster under it, in the expectation that he would shortly be called upon to act as an executioner.

From the low-swung horse ambulance that came lumbering up a stout man —obviously a veterinary—stepped. At the wave of his hand, the track attendant began leading Breadwinner toward the infield.

Petrie had come up now and painfully the horse and his human escort made their way to a place mercifully screened behind the wings of a jump on the steeplechase course. Then across the distance came the muffled sound of a single pistol report.

That was all, except that presently the policeman remounted, the horse ambulance lumbered back, and the little group of figures crossed the sunlit track together and came slowly toward her. At her elbow, an "oralist" was intently booking wagers on the next race.

Petrie returned through the clubhouse gate and he only nodded when June Lee fell in step at his side and walked with him to the jockey house. There, on the roof, required by the philosophy of their trade to accept the chances of the day, those boys in bright jackets who were to ride later perched on the railing, smoking cigarettes, or lay stretched on benches as lazily as sunning lizards.

DOWN below, in the small emergency hospital, the king of their craft and three of their lesser brethren lay, hurt or dead; they had no way of knowing which. They had seen these figures stride out, then borne in again, and perhaps some of them were secretly shaken. But accidents happen everywhere and even the steeplechase jockeys learn the philosophy of fatalism.

June Lee did not speak to the man at her side and he did not speak to her. Already they had become comrades in the sense that they could be silent together.

About the entrance of the jockey house hung a silent, constantly swelling crowd. Into this reservoir of solicitude and anxiety the boxes and clubhouse spilled their tides to mix with rat-faced touts and stable hands, both black and white.

A few, perhaps, were interested in the three lesser jockeys, but the many came and waited to hear news of the fallen hero. They stood in silence about the place where Jimmy Rockwell lay. It was as if a king had fallen.

For Petrie the crowd opened a lane, since he was recognized as the owner in whose colors the premier jockey of the American turf had ridden—perhaps ridden his last race.

Hardly realizing what she did or why she did it, June Lee walked with him to the door and stood outside where Burton, who had already elbowed his way to that point, stood waiting.

In the room where the stretchers ranged, three boys were still unconscious. The fourth, a midget of an apprentice, was stirring restlessly. The one nurse in regular attendance wore a harried look of stress under her mask of professional quiet. With one casualty at a time she was prepared to cope. To a quadrupling of that emergency she felt hardly equal.

It was then that Petrie recognized the woman who bent over the white-faced figure from whose breast the blue-and-white jacket had been cut away. He had never met her, but he had often seen her on the track. With her por-

trait in papers and magazines, a public, which included himself, was familiar. Now, as she turned, the costly simplicity of her black gown heightened the pallor of her cheeks.

Petrie remembered that Mrs. Starling had, besides her social activities, her large charities and her famous racing stable, other interests. She had established and nursed in a war hospital in France and to-day she had been among the first to enter this place when the jockey, upon whose services she had second call, was brought in.

At this moment Mrs. Starling was only a competent nurse, capably obeying curt orders from a physician upon whom duties were crowding with a hard insistence.

"I'm Martin Petrie," said the young man, as he met Julia Starling's eye. "He was riding my colt."

Mrs. Starling nodded.

"I've sent for my surgeon," she said. "We can't tell much yet. So far, we've been trying to restore respiration." Then a note of anxiety came into her voice. "There are four of them to be looked after here and only one nurse—unless you count me. If I had some one to help me out—any intelligent woman with quiet nerves to fetch and carry—it would be easier."

"Perhaps I can find you one," suggested Petrie. "I'll see."

Outside he found June Lee, still waiting.

"Do you know anything about nursing?" he demanded with an intended brusqueness. "Or can you help a nurse? Can you stand the sight of—of whatever you might happen to see and keep your balance? Or do you cry and get nerves?"

Tom Burton moved forward with a gesture of protest, but the lips that had opened closed again without speaking. The girl flushed, but her eyes met those of her questioner steadily, as she moved to enter.

"I don't know much," she said, "but I can obey orders."

"There'll be plenty of nurses and doctors here soon," Martin explained hastily, "but for the next few minutes the two nurses in there need a helper—and the next few minutes may make all the difference. Will you tackle it?"

June Lee Middleton nodded her bobbed head.

Then, with a sense of giddiness and momentary bewilderment, she found herself in the room where the injured lay and heard a high-pitched voice as the midget apprentice, first to regain speech, declared:

"It was Pritchard done it! He tried ter cut acrost Rockwell—an' bumped Breadwinner off his pins. We didn't have no time to pull out."

"Hush!" some one commanded. "You can tell that story later."

"Is he dead?" wailed the urchin. "Is Jimmy Rockwell dead?"

Mrs. Starling acknowledged June Lee's presence only with a nod, but it was a grateful nod, and the girl stood by, obeying orders. They were orders simple enough of fulfillment, requiring her only to take things from the busy doctor who was working over broken bones and to hand him other things in response to orders barked out in monosyllables.

ALREADY a general alarm had brought two other doctors and the gongs of ambulances sounded outside. The surgeon, at whose elbow the girl with the pale face had been standing, straightened and looked across the senseless figure of the jockey to speak to Mrs. Starling.

"We've got our patient breathing decently, anyhow," he said. "We'd better hustle him to the hospital now."

"What do you make of it, doctor?" inquired the older of the two women.

The physician shook his head dubiously.

"There seems to be a compound fracture of the hip. Also, there's a broken arm. As to the rest—internal injuries and so on—it will take the X ray and a fuller diagnosis to determine."

"If he recovers"—June Lee found herself hanging on the questions of this other woman with a strained anxiety—"will he ever ride again?"

The doctor smiled grimly.

"Let's think of saving his life first," he suggested. "Don't let's demand too many miracles at once. There's a great deal to determine yet."

"But your opinion at the moment? Naturally, it can't undertake to be final."

"My opinion at the moment is that, if he recovers, he will probably be lame for life. I fancy his riding days are over."

The beauty of Mrs. Starling was of ivory and ebony, a skin that suggested magnolia petals with hair and eyes of midnight. Now, her whiteness was startling in its contrast with her blackness. She held out her hand to June Lee and said simply:

"My dear, you have helped us. My name is Julia Starling."

"Mine is June Lee Middleton."

Unlike Petrie, the girl had not until now recognized this woman's identity and she was still young enough and still fresh enough from the provinces to thrill a little at meeting one so nationally known in the world of wealth and fashion.

"How are the others?" demanded the doctor of the race-course nurse, as she passed him, hurrying toward the door.

June Lee shuddered as she heard the quiet response:

"Pritchard is dead. The other two got off with nothing worse than shock and bruises."

They were carrying the still-insensible Rockwell to the ambulance and, as the girl and Petrie followed, there welled across to them from the home stretch, which they could not see, the crescendo of human voices massing and swelling into the clamor that follows a finish through the home stretch. Another race was coming to its issue at the wire and frantic thousands in the grand stand were on their feet, wildly exhorting their choices. This thing back here was all an incident behind the scenes. Out there, the play went forward.

"I must go with him to the hospital," Martin told the girl. "So, if you don't mind, I'll take you back to your party and hurry away."

"Tom Burton is waiting for me," she answered dully. "Will you ring me up to-night—and tell me all that you know?"

He nodded. Then, reflecting on the delay of getting his own car out of the congested parking spaces, he spoke to the interne and swung himself into the ambulance.

ON a warm night, there is something rather baneful in the way the lights fall from the amber-shaded bulbs at Tony's place, not far from Longacre Square. Tony's is an Italian establishment, not so gay as it used to be when the drinks came in bottles and glasses instead of in teapots and china cups, but, since old ties have a way of holding even when they have begun to gall, one still finds there, at the hour of the evening meal, a sprinkling of patrons running in the rut of habit. Here collect a coterie of gentlemen whose daily activities have to do with bookmaking on the race tracks, with the training of horses and with managing of boxers, supplemented by nondescript folk who find contentment in the society of such associates.

This evening, the weather had turned abruptly hot. The corner table, which was tacitly reserved, filled slowly as men dropped into their chairs with a dull sort of languor.

First to arrive was Joe Reppetto, a

heavy man who twenty years ago would have worn loud checks and a fancy waistcoat. Since times have changed, the Joe Reppetto of to-day was quietly if elegantly dressed. His face, smoothly shaven, save for its trim gray mustache, might have suggested a conservative banker. In pragmatic definition, Joe was a conservative banker. He was an oralist of the metropolitan race tracks, who did business not with the avaricious grand-stand masses—to which he was accustomed to make contemptuous reference as the "oy-yoy polloi"—but with the more sportsmanlike gentry of the clubhouse.

Joe had sat down and was spreading out on the tablecloth before him a sporting edition of an evening paper when John Glynn drifted in and took an adjoining chair. John was a lean and somewhat sepulchral individual whose business in life was to scout for prospective pugilistic champions and to usher them through the callow approaches to fistic eminence. Two or three of his green protégés had gone on to something like fame. A dozen had faded like morning-glories on the Sahara.

In turn, "Kid" Party, a wrestler, arrived, Mike McGarvey, a racing tipster, Benny Stern, a one-time jockey, and two or three others of no importance.

Just as in more fashionable clubs where the same men meet day after day with a comfortable contempt for manners, this coterie grunted brief greetings, then ignored each other and gave their orders—not forgetting the teapots and the china cups.

WITH the spaghetti, conversation began to flow languidly out of the arid stretches of silence.

"Jimmy Rockwell got his to-day," began Joe Reppetto briefly. "He was a good lad, too."

"He might stage a comeback, at that," drawled Glynn sententiously. "Broken bones can mend."

Reppetto cast a contemptuous glance sidewise.

"Is that so?" he inquired bitingly. "Now listen and learn, John. You handle pugs. Pugs are boys that make a living by stalling, nine times out of eight. Jockeys don't get far by stalling. This boy Rockwell's a damn good jockey—that is to say, he was, until two thirty-five p. m. this afternoon, Eastern standard time. Now he's smashed and he's done."

"Smashed, yes," argued Glynn obdurately, "but as to being done—maybe so—maybe not."

"Where do you get that stuff?" demanded Joe. "This boy Rockwell is the brainiest, nerviest lad that has ever had the leg up on a horse in my time, and my time goes back thirty years. That is, he was all that this morning. Now he's been smashed. If he ever comes out of the hospital and if I had a horse that figured to towrope his field, I wouldn't let that boy ride him against apprentices. No, sir, in spite of all his reputation!

"Why?" he went on. "I'll tell you why. When Jimmy Rockwell went down to-day, his nerve went down with him. And what happened to it is what happens to a china plate that the hired girl drops in the sink. He won't know it. He'll think he's as good as ever. He'll think he can go back where he left off—but there ain't a chance. First time he's called on to shoot his mount through a narrow gap, with two knees scraping and the danger of another spill looking him in the eye, he'll pull back and try to come around on the safe outside. It ain't that the boy's yellow; it's just that he's human. The rule ain't never failed yet."

"Just your notion," contradicted Glynn. "It all depends on the man. Some men can take punishment and come back. Some men can't."

"Is that so?" exploded Reppetto. "The Gold Wheat Stable has been paying Rockwell twenty grand a year for first call. Mrs. Starling has been paying him something around fifteen grand for second call. He's never taken a free-lance mount for less than one hundred bucks, win or lose—and you know the regular rate is ten for a ride and twenty for a win. Well, I'd like to make a little friendly bet with you—say, two hundred a side—that neither one of those stables will renew this boy's contract if he gets well. I suppose you'll say it's just their notion that, in a pinch, a smashed jock is a timid jock. It's a notion they'll save money on, though."

"I see in the paper," ventured Party, cutting in, "that the other boy, Pritchard, was killed outright."

"Yeah," assented Reppetto indifferently. "But maybe that ain't no great loss."

Benny Stern sat up straighter in his chair.

"You birds set here gassing about whether a mashed-up jockey can come back or not," he said, "and you give me a pain in the neck. I've been a jock myself and I don't have to theorize. It only took a broken leg and a brain concussion to make me fade out of the picture—and I ain't got no yellow streak either."

He paused and thrust a belligerent lower jaw out as he looked about the table.

"But that ain't what's eatin' on me right now. Whether Jimmy Rockwell ever rides again or not—he's fixed! He's made his pile and he can sit pretty from now on. That dirty little shrimp, Pritchard, was a rat—but he's dead."

"Well," drawled Glynn, "he should worry. He's out of trouble for keeps, ain't he?"

"Yes," went on Benny. "He's out of trouble for keeps and the turf won't suffer by his absence. But he married a damn decent little woman. She never knew that he was a rat. She thought he was a regular guy and she was crazy about him. What about her?" He paused, then added in a changed tone: "Her name's Myrtle an' she's got the t. b."

"What did this Pritchard bird leave her?" inquired Joe Reppetto quietly.

"What did he leave her? He left her a kid to support and three hundred dollars to do it with."

"Any insurance?"

"Not a paper mark. Some furniture that wouldn't bring a ten-case note at auction—and nothin' else except the sickly kid."

Kid Party had half raised his fork, salad-laden, to his mouth. Suddenly he put it down again on his plate and looked abruptly over at Joe Reppetto.

"Joe," he suggested softly, "how much do I owe you on to-day's races?"

"Five hundred, Kid."

"Let me off from half of it," came the still-soft suggestion, "and I'll hand it over with another two hundred and fifty to this Myrtle child. Are you game?"

"Sure I'm game!" came the answer through straight-drawn lips. "But I'm no simp. When I lose, I pay. When I win, I collect."

"Nothin' doin' then, eh?"

"Nothin' doin' is right."

There was an interval of silence. Then Joe looked over at Benny Stern.

"Listen, Benny," he made suggestion. "You say this Myrtle child has three hundred bones in cash. You seem to know her. Get that jack from her to-night and slip it to me. There's a sleeper in the second at Belmont Park to-morrow that looks to be a cinch at twenty to one. I'll lay it off with another bookie—and to-morrow night she'll have six grand, unless the skate falls down."

For a moment the ex-jockey reflected. Reppetto might be hard as nails, but also he was straight as a string—with

his friends. Likewise, his judgment was accounted sound.

Stern drew out his wallet and counted out six fifty-dollar bills.

"There's Myrtle's three hundred," he said shortly. "I'll collect it from her later on." He himself he added silently: "Or if I don't collect it, it's my own business."

Reppetto reached across and took the money, making no comment.

"By the way," inquired Benny casually, "what is this pup that you're settin' in the widow's mite on?"

"It's a filly by the name of Cash and Carry," answered the bookmaker tersely. "She's by Ready Money, out of Carry-on, and it's her first start—but she's burned up the track in her work and they're cuttin' her loose for a killing. Next start out, she'll be short-priced."

"All right," acceded Stern. "I never heard of the trick, but six grand will brighten up this cock-eyed world like fresh paint to Myrtle and her kid—if she gets it."

CHAPTER III.

LEFT AT THE POST.

JUNE LEE was sitting alone in her small apartment not far west of Washington Square and she was unstrung. This afternoon, for the first time in her life, she had been to the races. Personalities that had not, for her, existed thirty-six hours ago had declared themselves and assumed disquieting importance. One of them had been underscored by a tincture of tragedy.

She had come here to New York on what had been discouraged as a bold, almost a desperately bold, adventure. All the family ramifications back there in South Carolina, where her name was one sanctified by conservative traditions, had regarded her break toward independence as something savoring of wickedness.

Back there had been the plantation home, with its legend of womanly refinement expressed in terms akin to meekness—and she had answered the bugle call of ambition to venture into an unprotected world in which she must dare the winds that blow with untempered force alike on male and female.

She was here alone, trying to achieve fame as a sculptor. She knew in her heart that back there at home they were already grieving for her as for a ewe lamb which had elected to go forth among wolves, though she felt assured that the wolf who attempted to prey on her would be a rashly unfortunate beast, deserving pity rather than blame. But she could not hope to have that confidence shared in the family circle.

Just now her self-reliance was somewhat shaken. The man she had met last night and again to-day disturbed her. So long as he had been impudently self-assured, she could laugh at him, but when his face had sobered and paled after the accident he had somehow loomed more portentously in her thoughts. Unaccountably, he seemed to hold in himself a menace for her independence.

And the scene there in the jockey house, with four insensible figures lying outstretched and pallid, couldn't be dismissed. Their quiet faces haunted her.

She tried to read the paper and even the news columns chained her mind to these new thoughts. They spread before her the turf career of this boy who lay, perhaps, fatally hurt and related how he had begun his life on a Western ranch, riding cow ponies. They told of how a sort of genius for handling horses had developed in him and how, from a beginning at county fairs, he had captivated the cynical East as a sort of miracle jockey until his place at the top of his profession had become one of unassailable prestige.

She read an imposing chronicle of his success, triumphs in the greatest

stakes of America and in international matches, and also stories of how with less magnificent mounts he had, by his sheer riding genius, brought home forlorn hopes to victory. The sages recounted how in critical, heart-straining finishes this boy seemed to lift the mount under him and throw into it something of his own inherent courage and determination, until he brought it pelting home with a speed greater than its own.

It was in essence the encomium that goes to any master of his craft who is a shade—and a shade makes all the difference—greater than his colleagues.

At length the telephone rang. She jumped, then rose quickly to answer it.

"This is Martin Petrie," said the voice at the other end, and she found herself gasping:

"Yes, yes! What's the news?"

"I'm just leaving the hospital," he answered. "It was four hours before he regained consciousness. And after a little he lapsed into insensibility again."

"How badly is he hurt?"

"Pretty desperately. Compound fracture of the hip—broken arm—but apparently no internal injuries. I guess he won't die, but——" The voice paused, then added: "But neither will he ever ride again."

"Thank you," said the girl faintly. "I was waiting to hear."

AT Belmont Park the next afternoon, Joe Reppetto, the oralist, which is euphemism for bookmaker, strolled casually up to Will Donahan, a colleague whose business was identical with his own. The first race had been run and the crowd was milling speculatively about in the interval before the bugle sounded for the second.

The second event was announced on the program as "a five-furlong event for two-year-olds; purse, $1,000, of which $200 to the second and $100 to the third."

"Donny," suggested Reppetto nonchalantly, "I want you to do me a little favor. I want you to take a personal bet for me on Cash and Carry at twenty to one. That's the odds I'm laying myself."

"Why in blue blazes," inquired Donahan warily, "do you want to set in your coin on a skate that figures at the bottom of the form? Unless," he added suspiciously, "you are in on something I haven't heard about."

Reppetto shrugged his shoulders and his smile was amiably disarming.

"I'm just playing a hunch," he said. "I do that, once in a long while. This game would tire any man out if he didn't relieve his mind by being a damn fool now and then."

Mr. Donahan eyed his associate searchingly for a moment and then nodded.

"All right. I wish more simps played wild hunches—though you may be stringing me, at that," he said. "You're on!" He jotted down a note on a card. All that Myrtle Pritchard had was riding with the maiden filly, Cash and Carry.

Reppetto hurried away. He himself was jotting down notes on cards, strolling about among well-dressed men and women, seeming to be one of them, idle and pleasure-seeking, and, if he laid no odds on Cash and Carry, it was because no one asked him to do so.

The colts paraded to the barrier. There they milled and wheeled, reared and fumed after the irascible fashion of green two-year-olds, fretting the starter for five sweating minutes. Then the howl welled up from the stands:

"They're off!"

The barrier had been sprung to a ragged start, which was the best that could be had out of that sum of peevish tempers.

Eleven baby racers went away in as uneven a disorder as does a covey of flushed quail.

One stood stock-still, left at the post. That one was Cash and Carry. Inexperienced as yet to racing under colors, she failed utterly to comprehend what was expected of her in a field of rivals. With a world of speed bottled up in her trim ten hundred pounds of bone, muscle and flesh, she regarded the whole proceeding as a leisurely lark. She took no thought whatever of the dire need of Myrtle Pritchard, who had consumption—and a baby.

LATER, when Cash and Carry would be more fully schooled to the trials of life and its exactions of duty, she was destined to fulfill the hopes that her stable had been encouraged to entertain from its timing of her morning work-outs. To-day, she failed to grasp and construe the command laid upon her.

Breaking alone and belatedly behind her field, she galloped blithely but without undue haste as though this race course had been a park bridle path. Five lengths back of the ruck, she cantered home sedately, even with a certain prim dignity—but with no suspicion of vulgar haste.

So hopelessly and far astern was she that her jockey realized the futility of hustling her and suffered her to breeze along pulled up, in acceptance of defeat.

That night, Joe Reppetto was again the first to ease himself into his chair at Tony's restaurant. As usual, the others drifted in one by one and the talk was sporadic and deliberate.

"I see that the talent win most of the races to-day," suggested Kid Party, with a yawn. "You bookies was right hard hit, wasn't you?"

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Reppetto. "I broke a little better than even."

"I reckon, though," suggested Benny Stern, with a heavy emphasis of sarcasm, "Myrtle Pritchard didn't break better than even. I see the Cash and Carry skate ain't been sighted off Ambrose Light yet. When you lose, you always pay. When you win, you collect. That's your rule, ain't it?"

Reppetto nodded.

"Yes. That's my rule," he assented. "I find it ain't no bad rule either."

As he spoke, he reached his hand into his pocket with a leisurely gesture and held it there.

"A right funny thing happened out there to-day, though," he commented, almost absent-mindedly. "When I got out to Belmont, I got tipped off of Cash and Carry. I got it handed to me pretty straight that she wasn't ready yet—she needed more schooling at the barrier than she's had, before she could go over for a win. That sort of changed my plans."

HE paused and gazed absent-mindedly at the shaded electric bulb over the table, then in unhurried fashion he went on:

"So I shot Myrtle's three hundred at Crowding the Mourners in the fifth. It looked good to me, although it didn't pay but ten to one." He drew his hand from his pocket and thrust over to Benny Stern a fat roll of yellowbacks, bound with a rubber band. "There's the three grand. Slip it to Myrtle and tell her it's rubber money, so she'd better stretch it as far as she can. Yes, it's a right good rule to pay when you lose and collect when you win. At least, I try to follow it."

Stern unemotionally accepted, counted and pocketed the money, but his eyes glinted with a shrewd and speculative doubt.

"So you got tipped off about Cash and Carry being green at the barrier and you switched Myrtle's bet to Crowding the Mourners? That's what you said, wasn't it?" he inquired.

Joe met the searching glance of his dinner companion and nodded coolly.

"You heard me say it," he replied, "and you heard me right."

"Well, that's that, then! I'm just wondering about something in my own mind. You have to pay an income tax on your gambling winnings. So does Myrtle Pritchard. But she ain't got to pay nothing on money that was a free gift to her. Does she owe any income tax on this jack or not? That's what I want to know."

Joe Reppetto flushed to the ruddiness of brick dust. He saw the drift of that questioning and it irked him sorely to seem sentimental. He prided himself highly on being a hard-boiled proposition, unbiased by emotion. Now, his benevolent deceit had not only been uncovered, but was being publicly advertised to companions who also assiduously cultivated the crust of a professional hardness.

They would know, or practically know, that he had lost Myrtle's little store, just as they secretly knew that Benny Stern had never meant to collect it from her if it was lost, and that the three thousand he was so impassively paying over came out of his own winnings and his own concealed generosity.

Joe Reppetto frowned blackly.

"I see what you're driving at, you blame little smart Aleck," he commented, with an ironic laugh. "You're trying to make me out a slushy sap of a Santa Claus. Not a chance, son. I said I collected when I won and I paid when I lost. That's my rule and, if I break laws that other birds make, I keep those that I make for myself. But none the less and notwithstanding, if I was Myrtle, I wouldn't feel called on to go spilling nothing to the tax collector."

IT was a sunny morning with just such a fresh breeze blowing as on the day when Martin Petrie and June Lee had met at the race track. Now, they met again by accident on lower Fifth Avenue, not far from the Arch. Petrie saw her at a distance and thought that her face, under the soft little hat which sat snugly over the luster of her bobbed hair, had a flowerlike loveliness.

With eager strides Martin overtook and smilingly confronted her.

"I want you to go to the races with me to-day," he announced boldly. "And I won't take 'no' for an answer. They run the Appleton Memorial Steeplechase to-day—and until you've seen horses perform over the 'sticks' your racing education isn't complete."

June Lee shook her head.

"I don't think I ever want to see a race again," she declared. "I still dream of horses going down in a welter, with crippled jockeys under them."

"That's precisely why I'm insistent," urged Petrie. "I want to get that impression out of your mind. You saw the most serious accident that's happened on the American turf in many years. I don't want a memory like that to stand as typical in your thoughts. I want you to remember the inspiriting side of the game."

"But why," she inquired, "should I force myself to endure an ordeal—just to go to the races?"

"The breeding and racing of thoroughbreds," he told her, and his smile faced into momentary seriousness, "is a right important part of my life."

"Yes," she said. "I know that and I wish you all the luck in the world—but it's not an important part of mine."

"I intend," declared Martin steadily, "that those two things shall be parts of the same total."

They were walking southward together. The girl stiffened as she turned on him a cool gaze.

"Mr. Petrie," she suggested, with a dangerous quiet in her voice, "I live in the present and my family regard me as dangerously bold and forward. But I'm not a silly flapper. If we are to be friends, we must begin at the beginning."

His eyes did not drop and the smile did not leave them, but the lips tightened a bit.

"It hadn't occurred to me," he told her, "that I was doing otherwise. If we are to be friends in any real sense, our two lives must of necessity be parts of one pattern. Though we haven't known each other long, I feel that after ten years I shan't revise my judgment of you—and that judgment seeks better acquaintanceship. The rest can wait. I want to take you to the track early this afternoon and have you go to the barn and meet my horses, there in their stalls. You'll like them and they won't say anything that will offend you."

SHE considered, eying him critically, then nodded assent. So that afternoon she drove with him in his runabout to Belmont Park and to-day he seemed a somewhat different man, with a soberer face and a more deferent air.

"He's not conceited, after all," she told herself. "At least, not offensively. He's just self-confident because life has been easy to him."

"You're the first man I've ever known who was a turfman," she said, and, as he threaded his way along the crowded Hempstead Road, he turned and looked at her.

"But I'm not a turfman," he declared. "At least, I don't think of myself as one. I breed horses and race them—because the farm and the business came down to me from my father and my grandfather, because the love for horses is in my blood. But I think of that as an avocation and not as my life work."

"What is your life work?" she demanded.

He replied quite simply:

"I try to be a scientific farmer."

June Lee laughed.

"It's funny," she declared, "how far astray first impressions may lead one! I shouldn't have thought of you as a man who was ever very far away from the centers of cities."

"Woman," he replied solemnly, "you wrong me deeply. My roots are in the soil, but I know more about you than you do about me. That first evening I met you, they told me you were a sculptress with a brilliant future."

She flushed deeply and hastened to set him right.

"I'm just a beginner who hopes to learn something some day," she said, "and even in that hope I seem to stand alone, so far. It took a little courage, I believe, to come up here on my own—because the family opposed it bitterly. You are a Northerner, where ideas are less rigidly set. I guess you can't understand the maidenly restrictions that hedge a girl about in some of the more conservative sections of the South."

"Wrong again!" He laughed. "I'm not a Northerner at all. I'm a Kentuckian and my grandfather 'fit, bled and died' for the Confederate States of America."

She turned and looked at him once again in astonishment. This man kept surprising her and, by the same token, piquing her interest.

"So you're a Southerner, too!" She smiled. "I want you to tell me something about the horses—and about your life down there in the blue grass."

There was a ring of contagious merriment in his laugh.

"You don't know the danger of your invitation," he warned her. "When I get to talking about the old place at home, I'm about as reserved as a drunkard turned loose in a distillery warehouse. You see, I'm an orphan. I've lived there always, except when I've been going from track to track with my horses. Always, the port of return, the haven of refuge is the old farm in Woodford County with the dingy old portraits of the Revolutionary Petrie, the War-of-Twelve Petrie,

the War-between-the-States Petrie, the Spanish War Petrie—he was my father—hanging on the walls."

He paused, then added quite simply:

"Honeysuckle is honeysuckle everywhere and lilac is lilac—but the honeysuckle and lilac at Hickory Hill are just a shade lovelier and sweeter than anywhere else in the world—and the humming birds have brighter throats. That place lacks one thing only to make it perfect."

"And what is that?"

For a moment he looked with a straight boldness into her eyes, then he said quietly:

"I've been warned not to get ahead of the story—to begin it properly."

June Lee pretended an intent interest in the scenery. At length she remarked casually:

"I wonder if you'd care to let me try a portrait study of you in plaster?"

"When may I come for my first sitting?" he demanded, and her smile responded to his contagion of delight.

"Not before to-morrow morning," she told him severely. "My studio apartment is in Barrow Street." She gave him the number.

CHAPTER IV.

BRED TO THE PURPLE.

AT the track, Petrie led June Lee along lanes of cleanly painted barns where exercise boys led daintily stepping horses. Before each stall hung, freshly painted in the racing colors of its stable, the tin tubs, buckets and feed baskets that constituted the paraphernalia of the four-footed aristocrats quartered within. Cases containing liniments and leg bandages wore the same bright device and these appurtenances gave to the fronts of the stables as gay an appearance as flying flags. The laughter of negroes made of the Long Island place a scrap transplanted out of the South.

Martin Petrie led the girl to the barn where his own string was stabled and began initiating her into the varied personalities of his thoroughbreds—no two alike.

"This is Early Foot," he told her gravely. "He's a four-year-old that went wrong last fall and had to be thrown out of training."

"Do you mean," she asked, "that he can't ever race again?"

"Not exactly, but we've about given up the idea of racing him on the flat," her guide told her. "It's a thing that takes a bit of explaining, but oftentimes a horse whose legs won't stand the strain of racing on the hard surface is retired to the inner course and sent into the steeplechase game."

"You say it takes explaining. What do you mean? You know my ignorance is abysmal."

"It takes explaining because, on the steeplechase course, a horse carries much heavier weight, he goes a much greater distance and, besides running, he has to jump from a dozen to two dozen fences in each contest."

"Why don't his legs give out on him even quicker then?"

Petrie smiled.

"Because he gallops at a less breakneck speed—until he strikes the stretch—and because, instead of pounding a hard track, he runs on turf. Early Foot might make a really good steeplechaser, in spite of his legs, except that he doesn't take kindly to jumping. No one can foretell when he'll skim the barrier like a swallow, or when he'll refuse. He's a bit of a jockey smasher at times and the 'chase riders have danger enough without mounting bad actors."

THE girl stood at the door of the stall while the man went in. She caught her breath anxiously as the handsome brown stallion rose on his hind legs and seemed to attack his

owner with murderously pawing forefeet and lips drawn back over shining teeth. The man slapped at him with his straw hat and the horse backed away, still seeming to attack savagely, yet never actually touching the human intruder.

When Petrie came out of the stall, the colt reared again and bit savagely at the wire screen.

"That," the man told her, "is his idea of having a fine time. He's just romping. For all his pretended ferocity, he's as gentle a horse as ever looked through a bridle."

But it was after half a dozen introductions to lesser stars that he led her into the presence of royalty.

"This," he said, as he stood at the last stall door, "is my greatest pride. If there's anything in blood lines, that youngster is bred to the purple." He nodded to the negro boy who followed them and ordered briefly:

"Lead him out, Sam."

A minute later June Lee caught her breath. She felt her fingers itching to be modeling in clay the slender power, the intangible hint of nobility and gentleness that seemed to emanate from this superb example of horseflesh. Instinctively she drew nearer and laid a hand on the glossy jet of the smooth neck, while the young stallion turned his head and nibbled playfully at her shoulder.

Then, as she drew back, the colt threw its head aloft and stood looking, it seemed, at nothing near, but into far and intangible distances. His eyes were brimming with a liquid fire of latent energy.

"I have noticed about horses," said Martin slowly, "that some of them appear to look at nothing—but others never stand still without seeming hungry for vision. And I've noticed, too, that those who look farthest and most inquisitively away have the finer courage and the greater ambition. This one searches the horizon with the gaze of an eagle."

"What's his name—and his history?" demanded June Lee, as her eyes dwelt adoringly on the superb beauty of the colt.

"He's Sandollar—by Sandbar, out of Ready Money—she by Fair Play, the sire of Man o' War." Martin broke off and laughed softly. "Of course, those are only names to you," he said apologetically, "but to us they mean a great deal. There is nothing haphazard in the way we mate horses for breeding racers. In a fashion we are trying to be sculptors, too—sculptors of speed—and we model them not out of clay, but out of the blood of past achievement."

"Has he won many races?" she asked.

"He's a two-year-old yet," he explained, "and the season is young, but from the day he was foaled he's been the apple of my eye. From the first he showed us that he had both the heart and the speed that make stake horses. They will tell you that colts don't work furlongs in ten seconds flat—but that one has done it. So we took him to Churchill Downs at Louisville this spring for the commencement of his career."

He paused to fill and light his pipe.

"We started him in three races," he went on. "They weren't really races, for him. They were parades with a bunch of horses breaking their hearts somewhere behind him. He took the track and held it to himself through to the finish."

"You must have been proud of him."

"I was as proud as Lucifer," he declared. "The classic for two-year-old colts at the Downs is the Bashford Manor and the colt that wins it has set himself a record that it takes some doing to live up to. Sandollar, there, romped away with the Bashford by three lengths, hard held, and then and there

my ambition flared up and my heart became set on having him win the Kentucky Derby next year. Only twice in the history of the Downs has the winner of the greatest two-year-old race come back next season and won the greatest three-year-old race—those two were Worth and Black Gold. I built up the dream of Sandollar being the third."

After a pause, he added: "He hasn't started in the East yet. When he does, I want you present." His face was sober as his eyes met hers. "I'm trying to make you understand what the breeding and racing of horses means to the man who has it in his blood. One hears a deal of talk about the race track being nothing more than a gambler's device, a thing as much dominated by the greed for gain as a faro table or a roulette wheel. It's true that to some people that's all it is. But there are some of us to whom it means more to give to the studbook a great sire than to make a fortune." He turned and said to the negro:

"Put Sandollar back in the stall, Sam."

Then he went on thoughtfully:

"I have dreamed of this youngster fighting his way up to two-year-old preeminence: the Bashford, the Ardsley, the Champagne, the Flash—even the Futurity. Then I've imagined him going on to the more robust glories of three-year-old achievement: the Preakness, the Derby, the Belmont and the Withers! He's eligible for all of these races."

Suddenly he shook away his abstraction.

"But we must be getting over across the track now," he reminded her. "The first race doesn't matter so much, but the second is the steeplechase and we mustn't miss that. I have no starters to-day, so if the gambling spirit has entered your soul, I shan't feel unduly responsible."

BACK on the lawn, the girl felt a new elation as she watched the large crowds, listened to the drifting band music and caught the glint of shifting color. When she had picked a horse whose name she liked, in spite of her escort's contempt because he "rated at the absolute bottom of the form," her heartbeat quickened abnormally.

"How do I go about making my fool bet?" she demanded, and again the man laughed.

"Do you see that wealthy-looking gentleman just rising from a seat in his box?" he asked, and she nodded.

"All right," he said. "Only he isn't wealthy. By hypercritical standards he isn't a gentleman—and that isn't his box. He is one Joe Reppetto by name and he's a layer of odds."

At a nod from Petrie, the drifting Mr. Peppetto paused and lifted his straw hat.

"What will you lay me on Kittywink?" Martin inquired, and the bookmaker permitted himself a slight grimace.

"Twenty to one," he said. "But I feel like a thief, at that."

"All right," observed Martin. "Ten straight on the nose and I hope you have to disgorge."

Mr. Reppetto jotted down a figure and a set of initials on a card and strolled somewhat contemptuously away.

AROUND dozen two-year-olds of mediocre caliber pranced onto the track. Excitedly June Lee watched for the chocolate and lilac, which the program assured her designated her choice.

It seemed to her that the squirming, shifting mass over there would never start; then, while two stubborn little beasts still faced in the wrong direction, Jewel Case, the favorite, bolted and broke the barrier. She was off for a runaway and, though the boy on her back tugged her head sidewise and

fought her manfully, it was only after a quarter of a mile that he succeeded in pulling her up and turned her back again to the fretting group to which each moment of delay brought added peevishness.

It was a ragged start to which the field went away at last. From the lips of June Lee Middleton burst something like an unmaidenly war whoop, for, out of that chance eruption, chocolate and lilac had burst to the fore. Petrie smiled. He knew that in these short dashes the first away may well be the first home. There is not time enough for jockeying. It is as chancy as the opening of a grab bag.

He stood back and watched his companion. The slim figure with the bobbed head was leaning tensely forward. The lips were excitedly parted and, as the thundering bunch came pelting into the stretch, the lips of June Lee opened and she screamed:

"Come on, Kittywink! Come on there!"

Two horses passed the wire in what looked like a dead heat. The girl turned pleading eyes on the man at her side.

"Which was it?" she demanded almost piteously. "Which was it that won?"

"I'm afraid," Martin informed her, "that Barley Wheat nosed out your beast in the last jump. You see the numbers going up? Yes, they are placing the kitten second."

"And," she said mournfully, "I came so close to winning!"

"I don't want to encourage you unduly." Martin smiled, with a dancing mischief in his eyes. "But over those numbers you will see a word in green letters and that word is 'Unofficial.' Until the word 'Official' takes its place, the story isn't ended." He paused and added: "If I had been the boy on your Kittywink, I'd claim a foul. Gillespie bumped him clean off his stride there a few yards from home."

A minute later the girl saw two jockeys ascending the stairs to the judges' stand, one pale and determined, the other red and angry.

Then they came down again and, across the way, the first number was removed from the place of honor and profit. That which had stood second took its place. As a howl of wrath went up from the many backers of the disqualified second choice, the red word "Official" appeared. The claim of a foul had been sustained.

Martin turned to find Mr. Reppetto standing at his elbow with an impassive face.

"That's one bet I never expected to have to pay," said the oralist. "But they named you right when they called you 'Lucky' Petrie, I guess. Did you ever miss out on anything you went after, sir?"

Joe strolled away. Suddenly June Lee turned crimson.

"Did I disgrace you?" she inquired. "Did I act like a maniac?" Then, before he could answer, she tossed her head and laughed. "I don't care. I'm sold. I'm a racing fan! 'You made me what I am to-day. I hope you're satisfied.'"

She watched the steeplechase with bated breath, but of the ten horses that started every one finished without a fall or a jockey losing his seat. For one turn of the field, they ran so closely grouped that over each brush-topped fence the mass seemed to ripple with a fluid grace. Later, however, in the interval between events, she saw other jumpers not under racing colors, but being schooled by sweater-clad boys, and that was another story. That sight held her gaze anxiously, for here horses charged up and balked alarmingly, or sought to evade the issue by wheeling sidewise at breakneck pace and bolting out of the wings.

One brown fellow, of greater obduracy than the others, caught and held

the girl's eye. A satanic spirit of refusal seemed to animate him and the negro who strode him sent him dashing at each obstacle with an impetus which sought to make refusal impossible. Yet, time after time, the horse declined the issue and, when finally he came to the Liverpool, which stands in front of the clubhouse lawn, June Lee held her breath.

That, she thought, was a wicked-looking thing to ride over with the rigid height and breadth of a four-foot fence, a five-foot water ditch and guard rail beyond it. The brown horse seemed to have the same idea of its formidable menace.

The negro boy drove his mount at that obstruction with the sting of rawhide and the bite of spur. The horse hesitated, then belatedly responded to the lash and hurled himself upward. He cleared the fence and the water, but his forefeet "pecked" at the guard rail and he went down in a somersault, catapulting his rider over his head onto the hard track.

June Lee stifled a scream, but when she saw the boy come jauntily to his feet, shaking himself, and remount the horse that had also scrambled up, her fright was transformed into an expansive relief.

"That horse," she said, "doesn't seem to relish the game."

Martin nodded.

"I hope you don't forget all new acquaintances so quickly," he reproved her. "That horse is Early Foot—and you met him over at my barn an hour or so ago."

WITH a punctuality that evinced his eagerness, Martin Petrie presented himself at June Lee's studio apartment the next morning and, with a business-like detachment that was almost disconcerting, the young sculptress posed him and was at work in her long apron over the moist clay which was to grow into his likeness. Here alone with her, the man was no longer aggressively gallant.

It was as if he understood that this place was to be conscientiously regarded as neutral territory. It was not until he had been dismissed as a model and had taken up his hat that the gravity of his eyes broke into provocative light. Invariably, in those days, he urged her to go with him to the track in the afternoon. Once or twice she consented. Once or twice, too, toward midday, Tom Burton came to claim her for a luncheon appointment, so that sometimes two runabouts stood before the green-painted door with the brass knocker in Barrow Street.

But one day Martin failed to give his usual invitation and, when the door had closed behind him, the girl realized that this was the first time such an omission had occurred. Possibly it was a "hunch" that led her hastily to pick up the morning paper and turn to the entry list for that afternoon's races.

As her eye ran down the card, she found an announcement in which she guessed lay an explanation. An entry list was no longer a form of reading which puzzled her. Her racing lore had grown amazingly and, when she came to the starters and riders for the steeplechase, she was not wholly surprised. She knew that in these jumping races, where the weights were heavier, it was not altogether unusual for gentlemen riders to take mounts. Now she saw that among the names of the jockeys given without prefix appeared also two names prefaced by "Mr." and that one of these names was Petrie's own.

Early Foot was starting in the jumping event to-day and she guessed shrewdly that Martin was riding the erratic creature himself, because he believed he could coax him over the obstacles more successfully than a hired boy.

"It was just like him," exclaimed the

girl, "to say nothing about it! He's likely to have a nasty spill on that brute." She shivered a little as she remembered how the brown had somersaulted over the Liverpool with his negro rider. It disturbed her a little to realize how much apprehension she felt and, when Tom Burton presented himself at the door, she was almost abrupt in informing him that he must take her to Belmont Park and that they must hurry through their lunch to be there on time.

As it was, they missed the first race, and the girl's color was a little less flowerlike than usual as she read the jockey board already up for the jumping event and saw there among the other names: "Early Foot—Mr. Petrie."

Then, when the bugle blared the post call and seven horses paraded, she acknowledged a catch of excitement at her pulses as Martin, in the sky-blue with white crossbands, rode past the stewards' stand in the parade. The last time she had seen those colors was when Rockwell had gone down in them and now that memory seemed almost an augury—a grim prognostication of disaster.

The procession made its ceremonial passage under the eyes of the judges, led by the red-coated marshal, and passed into the green oval of the inner course. Over where the start was to be made, they lined up evenly and with almost no delay went sweeping off like a cavalry squad. Out at the front, running neck and neck, were a rangy chestnut under green-and-white hoops and a brown under sky-blue and white. Back of them raced the five others. Well bunched and straight for the white wings of the first brush-topped fence they went at a handy clip of racing speed.

"If he goes down in front," thought the girl, as her gloved hands clenched the rail, "he'll be trampled to death!"

OVER that initial barrier, however, every starter swept as if it had been the low sideboard of a polo field. So it was over the second jump on the turn, and already Martin Petrie had taken back off the pace to let the chestnut bear the brunt of the speed setting. The third fence was safely negotiated by the whole field. June Lee drew a long breath. To-day, it seemed, Early Foot was fencing with the best of them.

To-day, he appeared to have left behind in his stall that perverse obduracy of refusal and to have substituted for it an eager spirit of contest. He flew his jumps clean, with his hind feet neatly tucked under him. He took off in his stride and landed with sure certainty—but next came the water jump and, after that, the Liverpool.

They all looked too crowded there, she thought, and, although she may only have imagined it, it seemed to her that the seven riders tensed themselves with recognition of the menace which was before them.

Three horses now led Early Foot, but the girl's eyes had learned to see. She recognized that Petrie was holding him under restraint and breathing him along at ease for the harder part of the two-mile journey, when early speed had been burned out of the pacemakers.

She dreaded the water jump and she dreaded the Liverpool and, as the "suicide squad" swept up to the wings of the first, it was with an effort that she kept her eyes open.

There two went down, but she had seen Petrie's whip rise and fall stingingly and had seen the brown drift over the fence and the water, as thistledown drifts on a breeze. Already the two fallen riders were on their feet, but both their mounts had bolted and two starters were eliminated from the issue.

There was hardly time to notice these things before Petrie, now in the lead again, was boring at the Liverpool, with his whip driving to forestall any balk-

ing inclination in the erratic creature under him.

The sting of lash and steel sent the horse forward with an impetus that could not be denied, but in the head of Early Foot a memory stirred and, with the memory, stirred an impulse of terror. The impulse to set his four feet and stop dead in his tracks came too late to be obeyed, but not too late to take the steam and projectile power out of his effort. He rose across the fence and the water of the Liverpool, but he had jumped a shade short. Once more he struck the guard rail and once more he went down headfirst and rolling.

Petrie was thrown clear, but his head had struck and a bolt of pain shot between his eyes. It was the horseman's instinct in him that caused him to cling to the reins and scramble to his feet while still half stunned. Early Foot was already up again and the field had fenced clean and gone past.

The man vaulted to his saddle and set sail after them, feeling for the stirrups with his feet as he rode. The next jump he took with only one foot home in the irons, but now again his horse seemed confident and sure. It appeared that other fences than water jumps and Liverpools were mere colt's play to him and he disdainfully sped over them in his stride.

Now the pace was telling on the four front runners that had not fallen. At the first back-stretch obstacle, one of them lifted sluggishly, stumbled on his landing and lost his boy. The leading two were twenty lengths ahead, but they were tiring. Martin sat down on his mount and went to the bat.

The task he was attempting was too great and he did not quite accomplish it, but he was overhauling the two that led him as he flew over the last fence and through the stretch came Early Foot as if on wings of wind. He was beaten by three lengths of open daylight, but he finished second—and to finish in the money after a fall is no small achievement.

PETRIE did not see June Lee. He did not know she had been at the track. He went to his car after the last race and began driving back to town.

He was making as good time toward the city as the crowded roads permitted, but the ache in his head annoyed him, as such things will irk people of superabundant health who have little patience with pain. It was a small matter—and Early Foot had not done so badly after all. Abruptly a feeling of perplexity came to the man at the driver's wheel. A spot of blackness, for an instant, had swum before him, blotting out the road ahead, blotting out even the near view of his hands on the steering wheel. As instantly as it had come, it had passed.

It was as if a smoked glass had been hurriedly passed before his eyes. Funny thing, that, he reflected, and awkward to have happen while a fellow was driving through heavy traffic. After that he proceeded more slowly, and once again the black spot came and went.

"I guess it was the jolt," he said, but the second time it happened he pulled his car to the roadside and took out his watch. "I'll just stop here thirty minutes and let my eyes rest," he told himself, as he shut off his engine and lighted a cigarette. "I might have a smash with some one if I go on."

CHAPTER V.

A BULLDOG FOR COURAGE.

THE hospital room at St. Vincent's in which Jimmy Rockwell lay had been duly described and photographed. Newspaper men were as regular in publishing bulletins from the beside as though a grandee of finance or statesmanship lay there on the white cot, instead of a pigskin pilot.

But around the celebrated Jimmy

hung the sort of atmosphere that lends itself to the making of idols. Had he not been one of the world's greatest race riders, his personal virtues might have gone undiscovered or have been taken for granted, but there had been great jockeys before him less admirable in the personal sense. These had been wastrels whose skill had been corroded by ugly dissipations and, in contrast with them, Rockwell's inherent decency stood out for recognition.

The sporting world was carelessly tolerant. It realized that these riders for the most part had come up from stable swipes and exercise boys, that they led lives of excitement and chance. Such lives tended to an easy descent and to the turning of shallow heads unaccustomed to wearing crowns.

With Jimmy Rockwell it had been otherwise. His eye was always clear and it always looked level into that of another. Unthinkingly, turfmen who were also business men of national note found themselves addressing the boy as an equal—and it was a truism from Havana to Windsor that he was as "straight as a string."

So now when he lay cased in plaster, facing months of bedridden infirmity and after that perhaps the bleak future of a man doomed to crutches with a life on the ground instead of in the saddle, his table was littered with telegrams, cablegrams and letters of sympathy and flowers stood abundantly about him.

Martin Petrie gave his accustomed three raps and the jockey's face brightened to a grin of recognition as he weakly called out a welcome for his guest.

Petrie found him holding in his one good hand a copy of that day's *Racing Form* and propped so that he could catch glances at the briefly written news of the world, which seemed suddenly to have receded to immeasurable remoteness.

But the smile died quickly and Rockwell's voice was heavy as he spoke.

"They didn't tell me until to-day," he said, "that little Johnny Pritchard was killed in that spill."

Petrie shook his head.

"They figured," he returned, with a smile, "that you had troubles enough as it was."

Rockwell nodded.

"Just the same," he said, "I ought to have known. I'd like to have helped his widow."

"I understand," Martin assured him, "that Joe Reppetto and a few others made a killing on a bet they put down for her benefit. So she's staked for the time being."

Rockwell lay staring at the ceiling for a space.

"I've wanted to talk that race over with you, Mr. Petrie," he said, "ever since the thing happened. Maybe I rode it wrong. Maybe if I'd taken up and gone round on the outside, I might have saved your horse—if not the purse."

"Never mind my horse!" exclaimed Martin shortly. "I was attached to him, of course, but he was a plater and every horse must take his chances. His value in money was small. It's what the race cost you that troubles me."

"But going around on the outside," went on Rockwell thoughtfully, ignoring the interruption, "meant taking a long chance. Breaking through the gaps seemed the best bet—and I think I'd have nipped them out, at that, if Pritchard hadn't cut me down. Breadwinner was running over horses there at the end."

"The fault was entirely Pritchard's, Jimmy," the turfman assured him. "Every one saw that."

"He paid high for it," commented Rockwell dryly.

"And yet I wonder," argued Martin, "if you didn't pay higher. He never knew he'd been hurt. It was all over for him like the snapping of catgut—

but you got this." And he let his hand move toward the plaster-cased body on the cot.

"I'm glad at least that it didn't happen a year ago," Petrie added. "You were quoted in the papers before this happened as saying that this would be your last riding season, that you were tired of fighting down your weight and meant to race your own stable next year."

A wry smile crossed the jockey's face.

"I'm going to ride next year, Mr. Petrie," he announced, and his voice held a crackle of determination like the sputter of a dynamo.

Martin raised his brows in astonishment, then he nodded.

"Fine!" he exclaimed heartily. "Then the doctors have given you encouraging news?"

Jimmy shook his head. It was a good head with clean-cut features under heavy, dark hair and, just now, the jaws were set like concrete.

"No," he replied. "The doctors tell me I'm done. They say a fracture like this won't hold up under riding. They say I'll have to feed up so, to get back my strength after months in bed, that I can't ever hope to get down to riding weight again. They say——" He paused and his lips curled scornfully. "They say that after a shock like that I won't find my nerve quite the same; that it's cracked like the bone."

"Oh!" murmured Petrie, forbearing from argument. He saw in that last statement the challenge to which this young man had so militantly responded. The invalid was salving himself with false hope, but perhaps just now he needed that illusory comfort.

"I had about determined to quit after this season," went on the bedridden lad. "But this season is still young. There were the stakes at Aqueduct and Saratoga and the fall season here. Now, I'm determined to ride next year. Hell itself shan't stop me!

"The Brooklyn Handicap," he continued, after a short silence, "is run in two weeks. I was to have ridden old Sabre, but he hasn't much chance against Delinquent. I see that Maltby is to have the leg up on the favorite."

Martin grinned.

"This lad Maltby is coming in for slathers of sudden glory, isn't he?" he demanded. "For a youngster who only lost his bug at New Orleans last winter, he is cutting a wide swath. A month ago, the East ridiculed him as a winter-track wonder. Now they're all proclaiming him a wizard."

Rockwell nodded.

"He's a good boy," he said, "and he's developing fast. If his head doesn't swell, he'll go far. As for only losing his bug last winter, they sometimes ride their best when they haven't been out of the apprenticeship class long."

THE two turfmen were talking in the argot of their world. To them the "losing of a bug" meant that no longer did an asterisk appear on the racing program before the name of young Maltby, an asterisk which, so long as it endured, designated him as still an apprentice.

"My starter is still eligible for the Brooklyn," mused Petrie, "but I think I'll scratch him out. He's been working well and he likes the track at Aqueduct—but with Delinquent in, and well ridden, I can't seem to see Highjacker in the money."

Rockwell studied the wall for a minute before speaking, then he remarked slowly:

"There's another boy that's just beginning to be known. The bug still sticks to him—and yet before long I believe he'll be riding with the best of them. It seems born in him. He judges pace; he keeps his head; he's afraid of nothing. I mean little Joe Garden."

Petrie nodded.

"Yes," he agreed, "I've been watch-

ing him for some time myself. He's a comer—and the East hasn't discovered him yet."

"I take an interest in Joe Garden," went on the older jockey, "because I've taught him most of what he knows. He began as an exercise boy with the Gold Wheat Stable and I've tried to put him on to some things about riding. I wouldn't have fooled with him, though, if he hadn't shown the stuff. He drinks up what you tell him like a bum gulps down liquor. I believe in him and I've worked hard with him. He has the makings of a great rider."

"If he's a pupil and a protégé of yours," returned Petrie, with a laugh, "I'm more than ever interested in him!"

"You're running your own stable," said Rockwell, "but I'm going to tell you something. If I were you, I'd pitch that kid, Garden, into the pilot house on Highjacker and cut him loose in the Brooklyn——"

Petrie opened his eyes, but he only said:

"Go on, Jimmy. I'm listening."

The broken jockey's face lost its stiliness of expression. It was tense and alertly drawn as though he were in the saddle again, riding a close finish.

"You know Delinquent," he said. "He's a bulldog for courage and big of heart, but his temper cracks. He's a heavy-headed and a bull-headed brute. He swerves in the stretch and loses ground, unless he's held straight—and it's hard to hold him true. I know him and I know how many races he would have tossed away if he hadn't been made to hew to the line."

The boy paused. As if again he was riding a critical stretch finish, he sought to lean forward and a spasm of pain crossed his face.

"I'm not out to knock young Maltby," he went on slowly. "He's going to be a great jock, but he still has weaknesses that are being overlooked just now. He's not at his best as a post rider. He hasn't mastered the art yet of holding his mount true and without swerving in a close fit. When he's crowded and reaches for his bat, he drops his horse's head—and when Delinquent's head goes down, his race is pitched away.

"Highjacker is a strong finisher if he isn't pumped too hard in the first furlongs," Rockwell continued. "Little Garden is a demon on a whipping stretch drive. Have him rate your horse off the pace until the first speed scorches the early birds. Then have him come from behind—and you've a chance!"

The boy grinned more widely and added:

"They call you 'Lucky' Petrie, don't they? Here you have a horse with a chance that the public will overlook, a boy that's better than people think. If you want to set in a nice little stack, you can almost write your own ticket. All that people are remembering about your colt, just now, is that he finished absolutely last in the Derby."

Petrie nodded.

"And they don't know," he remarked, "that he pulled up after that race with cramps and a high fever. He's sound now."

THE morning sittings in the studio had advanced and the undertaking on the modeling stand, shrouded between times in damp cloths, had begun to take on a likeness and to approach completion. As Petrie watched it grow, he sought to analyze the ability of the artist and found himself of two minds. There was a glowing cleverness about June Lee's work and yet, perhaps, she was only tremendously clever, after all. Perhaps she wanted the underlying robustness of genius and might not go as far as one to whom results came with a less facile ease. He lacked the critical knowledge to judge of that.

Martin thought that if this girl for-

ever laid aside her modeling tools, life might still be full of richness for her. It might contain interests, too, that would fall more into step with longings that were growing disquietingly in himself. Yet he recognized that failure of ambition would confront her with the black visage of despair. For a time, at least, it would obscure all else and make her life tragic. He wondered just what failure might mean to her in the end —and what success would spell.

THE Martin Petrie who sat alone with her as she worked in her studio apartment was no longer challengingly flirtatious. Perhaps a deeper color in his own feelings made that attitude seem paltry to himself. She had in these days built up a picture in her own mind of the old brick mansion under the oaks and shagbarks at Hickory Hill, with its barns and paddocks and exercise tracks, its clover-sweet pastures and woodlands; and she had a realization of the man's deep feeling for the place and the traditions his fathers had founded.

He had caught glimpses, too, of certain inside aspects of her mind, glimpses that made a fire of ardor leap in his pulses, and yet that tamed him with something like despair of conquering her eagle spirit of independence, of making anything else in life measure up to rivalry for the fire of her ambition. So far, he had never lost a battle. Here before him lay a battle that he knew he dared not lose, because it would make all other victories empty.

This feeling gave a curbing patience to the runaway impetuosity of his spirit. Life had, heretofore, been a blithe thing with health and boldness, a thing to be taken at a gallop. Now he faced a campaign in which triumph was not so certain.

Martin would meditate in silence as he posed, until at length she would lay aside her modeling tools and say:

"The model may rest now."

She would stretch herself during these intervals on a chaise longue as indolently relaxed as a resting cat, but, under the glint of her bobbed hair, her eyes continued to study her model.

"Agassiz once said," she told him, "that we never really see or know a thing until we try to portray it with a pencil or a brush. The same might be said of modeling tools."

He lighted a cigarette and drew a chair over as near her as he dared.

"You've been seeing me that way," he answered slowly. "I suppose by this time you can tell me why I ought to be in jail." For a moment he paused and studied his cigarette, then he added:

"All right. I'm braced against the wall. Pronounce sentence!"

"I was wondering," she said, very deliberately, "what a crushing defeat in life would do for you."

"A crushing defeat in life does plenty for any man, doesn't it?"

"It destroys this one and makes a phœnix out of that one," she answered in a low voice. "A phœnix coming up out of the ashes."

"I hope the test doesn't come my way," he returned, with a smile, "but I have only my own personal opinion of myself—and it may be biased. You have been modeling me. Can *you* tell?"

"I was wondering. In the days of a d'Artagnan, failure wouldn't ever have come to you. You would have laughed and fought your way through life. But these aren't the days of the musketeers, are they?"

"I'm afraid there have been certain changes."

"You're geared high—for success," suggested the girl slowly. "If you fell into any other going—I wonder! I thought, at first, that you were conceited, but that was an injustice. What looked, at first glance, like too much self-esteem is only self-confidence. That ought to be an asset, and yet——"

"And yet you think that those qualities might prove brittle?"

"I'm not sure that I have an opinion yet—I am only wondering. A thing that can't bend may—break."

He sat studying the end of his cigarette and, for a while, he said nothing. Across his well-modeled face went a play of expression that made his companion think of a changing landscape under fleeting alternations of open sunshine and scudding cloud.

"Do you know, June Lee," he admitted slowly, "I've sometimes wondered about that myself! It may seem to you that I think only in terms of horses—and most people will tell you that, in this day of motor cars, the horse is a species that is passing to extinction—yet we all have our emblems of thought."

As he paused, with his brows gathered thoughtfully, the girl sat studying his face, pleased with it and a bit amused at its intensity. Then she prompted:

"Horses are an emblem I like well enough."

"Well, one occasionally finds cold-blooded horses and half-bred horses that seem the equal of the thoroughbred in stamina—until the supreme test comes. It is when the heart is called on for a bravery and an endurance that seems to cross the line of living capacity that the two are separated. Then the thoroughbred can meet his test and his meaner-blooded brother fails. It is only the thoroughbred that can break down—and finish on sheer nerve, even though he falls dead just past the wire. A man likes to hope that, when the big trial comes, he'll prove the thoroughbred."

She thought he looked the thoroughbred, but she only nodded. The soberness left his eyes as his chin came up with a little self-confident jerk that was his characteristic.

"I have no inferiority complex," he went on. "I want the best and I try to get it." Again he fell silent and his eyes met hers and held them. "That's why I want you," he said quietly.

She gave a sudden start, as she sat with her hands behind her head, then she laughed. "It's time for the model to pose," she commanded quietly.

THERE was annoyance in Major van Cleve's voice. "Burton should be here," he said. "He is usually prompt."

The group that sat awaiting the arrival of the young, but already notable, attorney was small in number, but in importance it was large. Van Cleve, Morton, Jonesburg—these were names that connoted power in certain circles of industrial development on the eastern slopes of the Alleghenies and their hard-headed empire rested on soft coal.

Van Cleve drummed on the table top in the downtown office of Eastern Consolidated and, as if his rapping were that of a medium seeking to materialize a spirit, the knob turned and Tom Burton entered with a brisk apology for his five minutes of tardiness.

"Held up in a traffic jam," he explained. "I hope I haven't kept you waiting too long."

"Except for your usual punctuality, Tom," declared Morton, "it wouldn't have been noticed as delay. But sit down. Van Cleve has an idea he wants to promulgate."

Burton laid his brief case on the glass-covered mahogany and dropped into a chair, but Van Cleve rose and began pacing the room, pausing occasionally at the twentieth-story window to glance out at the stretches of bridge-spanned river and distant bay that lay around the broken, towered area of lower Manhattan.

"You know something of the soft-coal situation, Burton," he began. "You know what overdevelopment came, during and after the war. You know how prices soared, how the men with the

picks held us up and worked in silk shirts and acquired a new standard of living. You know how the howl was for coal—more coal—hard coal—soft coal—any old coal! It was 'Give us coal,' then, 'and damn the price!' "

He paused and bit savagely at his cigar.

"Then you know something of how the bottom dropped out. You know how men who earned fifteen dollars a day and upward in the shafts were glad to get four a day and work three days a week. You know how expensive developments began running toward loss, seeking only to keep alive and solvent for better days."

"Yes," assented Burton quietly. "In a general way I know those conditions."

Van Cleve jerked his head.

"Very good," he said dryly. "You know we are interested in coal mined on the eastern slopes of the mountains —and perhaps you know that in Kentucky, which lies on the western slopes, the devolpment went on as madly as elsewhere. More madly, indeed, because there was virgin territory—practically inexhaustible territory!"

"Yes, that's familiar ground."

"Now I come to my point." Van Cleve snapped his jaws together and stood at the head of the table. "So far, the Kentucky fields can reach the Eastern seaboard only by a long and roundabout haul and freight rates hamper them. Those fields can't put coal across the mountains to the East yet, but they can serve the lake territory. We can serve the East *and* the lake territory."

The attorney nodded his head.

VERY well!" went on Van Cleve. "The lake region is a valuable field —and there we compete with eastern Kentucky. At present prices and future prices, as we can foresee them, coal doesn't offer an appetizing margin for competition, with its corollary of price cutting. With the Kentucky fields out of the game, our own output might pick up, we might even show a profit at present prices and under existing hardships."

Burton raised his brows.

"So that all we have to do is to strangle eastern Kentucky," the attorney said. "I should say it was quite a mouthful to bite off. They're fighting there for survival—and they've tied up too many millions to surrender tamely."

"If I stopped with no more said," commented Van Cleve sharply, "I would stamp myself a fool. It happens, though, that the State of Kentucky is by way of undertaking to strangle the business in her own borders. That is to say, from the viewpoint of the Kentucky coal man. Those coal men are our business confrères—and our competitors. Just now, we have too many confrères and too many competitors. We could do with fewer and better."

"Perhaps," suggested the young attorney, "I will understand better with a somewhat fuller outline of facts."

"I mean to give it to you. In Kentucky, the coal interests lie along the ragged edge of the State, in the Cumberland Mountains. The rest of the State assumes to see there an intrenched wealth of mining barons. The rest of the State is seeking to elect a legislature, a year from next fall, that will put a direct tax on coal at the mine head. The coal operator is howling that such a tax will spell his ruin."

"Oh!" Burton nodded slowly.

"If such a legislature be elected and such a tax law be enacted," went on Van Cleve pointedly, "our coal could enter the lake region uncontested, or weakly contested. The personnel of the next Kentucky assembly becomes interesting to us. It hinges on about five State senators and half a dozen members in the lower house. Now you see my drift, don't you?"

"I do—but where do I come in?"

"As an attorney, Burton," suggested

Van Cleve quietly, "you have ability, which I don't wish to question. But as an organizer you have a real talent. We can commend you to prominent politicians in Kentucky who are sponsoring the fight for imposing this tax. In a quiet but very effective fashion you might aid them and, by so doing, help us. There is time enough to study the situation and begin early."

The lawyer sat in meditative silence. At length he said:

"I am retained by you gentlemen—to further your plans. It seems a legitimate affair, though it verges on the destructive. I suppose the proponents of the tax law have a defensible case?"

"Excellent!" growled Van Cleve. "It's a case of letting capital ease the tax burden from the shoulders of the farmer."

"So we rush to the aid of the embattled tiller of the soil," commented Burton, with a smile.

Van Cleve sat down and lighted the cigar which he had been chewing. Morton took up the thread of the narrative in a softer voice.

"As against the rural sentiment, which is all for letting King Coal take up the tax burden," he explained, "you will find a powerful interest with an opposite view; the interest of the Kentucky Jockey Club, of the thoroughbred farms and the blue-grass turf interests."

Tom Burton was opening his cigarette case. Now he lifted a puzzled face and held the cigarette unlighted.

"Now you're getting me beyond my depth," he remarked. "What in the name of Heaven have the racing interests of central Kentucky to do with championing the coal miner in the hills?"

"Nothing at all," Morton assured him. "It's the sheerest political coincidence, but political coincidences make political allies. It happens that the elements in the State which champion the coal tax are making their strongest plea to the dirt farmer—not to the blue-grass breeder. It happens that a reform issue is a powerful weapon when a Kentucky speaker goes out on the hustings to address the tiller of the soil. Just now that reform plea is cleansing the fair name of the State from the legalized gambling of the race tracks. That phase of the case is beside our point. It merely happens to be a fact that the fight you are to aid in organizing is a dual effort to seat an assembly pledged to levy a coal tax—and to repeal the law permitting pari-mutuel betting at the race tracks of the State. I dare say it means the death of Kentucky racing and Kentucky breeding, but, from where we sit, that is beside the mark."

CHAPTER VI.

ONE GOOD EGG.

TO trace an analogy between a woman who seeks the cloistered rigors of a convent and one who lives the life of Greenwich Village and sets her course by whatever star guides the would-be artist, may seem a strained parallel. The one has taken vows that hold her in spiritual bonds; the other is apt to class as inhibitions, and throw disdainfully aside, the yoke of even worldly conventions. Yet in the mind of June Lee there was one guiding principle which she believed to be common to both.

To her, as to the nun, matrimony and even serious love affairs lay along a road she had resolutely marked for herself, "No thoroughfare."

Back there in the South, she had from childhood had her little coterie of callow lovers. In her Southern blood was an inherent strain of coquetry, but this she had resolved to exorcise as though it had been an evil spell. Her kind were wicked with their eyes and reckless with their sorceries before their fingers wore the ring, because they

knew that, when the dew of courtship days had been sun dried by marriage, their coquetry was ended and life became serious.

Now when she had come North she had set up her deity and that deity was to be art, pointing the way to fame. Men and marriage must not interfere with this set resolve, because she was dedicated to her purpose with the exaggerated seriousness of the young. That was why, while her eyes glinted with a score of shifting, tantalizing lights, she still regarded herself as definitely dedicated to a single fixed and loveless course in life, rigorous in its devotion to ambition.

Then it was that she danced with the Prince of Wales.

It was not that dancing with the prince was in itself such a revolutionizing event as to mark an epoch, but that the week-end which brought it about also brought other things to pass.

Besides his regularity at the race track every afternoon, two other things were part of an almost undeviating program to Martin Petrie in these days. One of them was his morning sitting for his portrait bust at the girl's studio and the other was his visit and chat with the broken jockey at St. Vincent's.

On several of these hospital visits he met another and a more celebrated caller. That caller was Mrs. Starling, whose name stood high on the social register, equally high in Dun and Bradstreet's and higher still in the unpublished catalogue of graciousness and sweetness of character.

Martin Petrie and Mrs. Starling had certain things in common. Both of them came from old, and in these days less vaunted, aristocracies. Both of them held in their hearts an almost passionate love for the thoroughbred horse —and each was devoid of self-consciousness. Likewise the link stood between them of a genuine fondness for a race rider who now lay sorely hurt.

One day as Petrie was handing Julia Starling into her car at the hospital door, she turned and asked:

"What has become of that stunning girl who helped us when we needed help in the jockey room? Miss Middleton, wasn't it? She was a brick that day and lovely to look at, even with her pale, frightened face."

Petrie's eyes lighted responsively. He told Julia Starling how he was even then going for a sitting at the girl's studio.

"Let me go, too!" she said. "I want to thank her."

The girl recently transplanted from South Carolina was a bit flustered when she opened the green door with the brass knocker—and saw who stood there, besides her model. She was young and, as reckoned in Julia Starling's world, she was poor. It was just a bit like receiving royalty without warning, but the candid simplicity which was part of June Lee's breeding saved the situation from awkwardness and, after the first roselike flush of her cheeks, she was as natural as though the girl who lived on the floor above, and who tried to paint in the manner of Cezanne, had come downstairs in her smeared painting apron.

Julia Starling was charmed—and she came again, alone.

THAT visit of the young prince to Westbury would have been, had he been allowed his royal wish, a period devoted to horses. The polo practice fields, the winged jumps where hunters were being schooled, the race tracks where thoroughbreds were being run—these were the meccas that he sought. But society and the newspapers decreed otherwise, so that on the pleasant, straight-eyed young face of the boyish English gentleman appeared the almost harried look of one pursued. When it became needful to doff his whipcord riding breeches and array himself for

the occasional garden party or dinner which he could not in grace escape, he found himself looking with relief on any face that did not wear the expression of a pursuer.

It was during that visit that June Lee, frightfully perturbed lest her wardrobe prove inadequate, and Martin Petrie, not at all perturbed about anything, were week-end guests of Julia Starling and quite adventitiously and briefly atoms on the fringe of the set which was for a little while entertaining and possibly exasperating young Wales.

Even the opulence of that Long Island colony could not buy immunity from mosquitoes. The British visitor found that another swarming species was even more troublesome—the ubiquitous gentlemen of the press. So the royal youth fell back on incontinent flight at times and slipped away almost as though he were a shadowed suspect, by elaborate systems of flight, to devices of his own.

"Where is our young Kentucky friend this evening?" demanded one of the men at Mrs. Starling's house party, as a group smoked in the billiard room. "I haven't seen him since dinner—and he plays a wicked stick of billiards. I miss him."

Tom Burton grunted. He was a house guest, too, because he was attorney for certain interests of the hostess and because he found it diplomatic to accept all invitations, which caused his name to appear in the published lists of such company. To him it did not seem important that Martin Petrie was missing. It was important, however, that June Lee Middleton also had not been seen since dinner.

"Our friend Petrie," drawled a middle-aged gentleman, who was tinkling ice and other ingredients in a tall glass, "could not tell us where he was going, because he was part of a secret expedition. Noblesse oblige imposed a Masonic silence upon him and he observed it. I believe he has sneaked off for one of those small, secret and unofficial parties at which his royal highness dances till dawn with a few hand-picked playmates."

"How come?" inquired Burton, with a carefully schooled casualness of voice. "How come that this lad from down in Kentucky gets hand picked by royalty?"

"I should say there was quite a list of reasons," ventured the middle-aged gentleman, still tinkling his glass. "The first is that Petrie is dashed good company and makes it quite evident that he doesn't give a tinker's dam whether he's noticed or not. Just now the prince lad is ready to embrace any one who gives him elbow room."

He paused, then went on:

THERE'S another reason, too. Wales saw Petrie schooling a horse over the high jumps this morning. Now, quite unreasonably, the papers have been deviling H. R. H. because he has had some spills in the hunting field—just as if any chap who rides hard didn't have to fall hard now and then. But these office-chair scribes have rather heckled our visitor and he took a shine to the way in which Petrie jumped his mounts."

"If the prince's accidents are those of any good horseman," suggested Burton, "why does he need to study or copy the methods of another?"

"He's a glutton for new ideas," came the dry response. "America taught Britain to shorten her stirrup leathers and adopt a new racing seat. If America can teach Britain a new hunting seat, this boy isn't too haughty to learn."

He paused to sip from his glass and then added:

"Rumor has it that the small party will dance till dawn, then the prince and young Petrie will slip home, change into riding togs and go to the schooling jumps together about daylight."

"You have given two reasons," commented Burton, "for this sudden palling of the hard boot and the prince. You said there were several."

The man with the tall glass smiled.

"The visitor likes to dance with a partner whose dancing he likes," was his cryptic reply. "He seems to have found that the little South Carolina girl is light-footed—and is not a tuft hunter."

"What has that to do with Petrie?"

The other shrugged his shoulder.

"Perhaps nothing. Perhaps only a mistaken notion on Wales' part, that the two are better friends than common. He can feel free to dance with a sensible girl who, he fancies, has an understanding with a sensible man."

"How does he get that way?" almost snorted Burton, and his face suddenly flushed into an anger which he at once repressed.

The gentleman who had so far been communicative caught the truculent flare and subsided. He had noticed that Burton had been no less attentive to the little girl from the South than had Petrie. If, of the two, the prince found Martin the more congenial, that seemed a poor answer to give the man discriminated against.

But Calvin Littleton, tall, lean and hard-headed, who stood lounging on the hearth, was less considerate. He took up the thread of the narrative where his more discreet companion had dropped it.

"Perhaps I can answer that," he suggested. "I'm a brother turfman of Petrie's and I've watched him grow up. I knew his father before him. Perhaps this young royalty has a bit of intuition. If he has, he can see that Martin Petrie was born under a lucky star. What he goes after, he gets. If he goes hard after a girl, my money is on him to win."

"This luck stuff is like a chain with a weak link." Burton laughed, a shade sourly. "It's only good till it breaks once."

"It hasn't broken yet—and of course the reason is that it isn't really luck at all," announced Littleton stubbornly. "This lad has been bred right. He goes through life with eyes that are unafraid. He's sure of his destiny and, because he never doubts it, it doesn't fail him. He's a distinctly good egg."

"Meaning fresh?" inquired Tom, a shade sullenly.

"Fresh enough—but not too fresh," retorted the other. "However, you might ask him that question yourself."

"Perhaps I shall," said Tom Burton.

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *on the news stands December 20th.*

SAFER IN THE AIR

IT doesn't seem reasonable, but the figures are there to prove that it is so: It is safer to send registered letters by air mail than by railroad!

In the three years from 1921 to 1923, inclusive, the U. S. air-mail service carried 4,316,500 pounds of mail with a loss of only 230 pounds. The rate of loss, therefore, amounted to five one-thousandths of one per cent. In 1922 the percentage of registered mail carried by railroads and lost or destroyed before reaching its destination was seven one-thousandths of one per cent.

There isn't much to choose between five and seven one-thousandths of one per cent. But the average man wouldn't have guessed that airplanes could compete with railroads on a security basis at all—let alone beat the railroads, even by an infinitesimal margin.

The Pretenders

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Mollycoddle," "A Case of Professionalism," Etc.

Many a man's career goes to pieces on the shoals of deception before he has had the chance of proving to himself his own worth; but if he has courage to bare his deceptions to the world, and brave its harsh criticisms of his conduct, he may right himself before the channel is out of sight.

EARLY in his sophomore year, Perry Robinson got into bad company. He started wrong that year at Yale and no one made it his business to set the young man on the right track. College sentiment frowned on the "sporty crowd" of which he tried to be a leader; but he could not see his own folly and continued to make a noisy nuisance of himself. From his perverted viewpoint, college life meant wearing conspicuous raiment, drinking and smoking much more than was good for him and keeping late hours with other unlicked cubs.

A good-looking, attractive boy was Perry Robinson, with no great strength of character, inclined to drift in whatever current he happened to find himself. He needed restraint, guidance and sympathetic understanding to save him from going to pieces on the threshold of manhood.

The boy was very much alone in the world, however; his father had been living abroad for several years without coming home and Perry had been in private schools since he was a shaver in knee breeches. His father's letters were filled with good counsel and high ambitions; but their intense anxiety for the boy's success made Perry so afraid of disappointing this distant mentor that he confided no word of his temptations and failures. He was expected to make a shining mark at Yale as a scholar, an athlete and a gentleman, and his father seemed to take it for granted

that such achievement was Perry's for the seeking. Without realizing it, they were utter strangers to each other.

It befell one day in late October that Perry was reading one of these admonitory letters, postmarked "Cairo," the stationery stamped with the lines:

Edward Sanford Robinson,
International Law,
14 Rue de la Paix, Paris.

The son was in low spirits; he had squandered his quarterly allowance in the first month of the term; he had been warned for "low standing" in his classes and for absences from recitations and the captain of the sophomore eleven had dropped him from the squad for a flagrant breach of training. It was, therefore, with a gloomy countenance that he read in his father's precise handwriting:

Your letter just received, telling me that you are playing football with your class team. I am greatly pleased, but I expect to hear of your playing on the varsity field before the end of the season. Keep a good standing in your studies—I take it for granted that you will be well toward the top of your class—but don't grind too hard.

I see by the *Yale News*, to which I have subscribed, that your class numbers two hundred men. It means a good deal to forge to the front against such competition, but you can do it. I expect you to do it.

I am in Cairo on business and shall remain here for two or three months before returning to Paris. Address care of my bankers as usual. I have been hoping to run over to see you year after year, but always at the last moment some important matter or other has turned up to spoil my vacation plans. However, I am still looking forward to the reunion so long deferred.

PERRY let the letter drop to the floor, as he stared out at the street and turned over in his mind the same old riddle which for so long had puzzled him:

"If he has no time to come over here and see me, why has he never asked me to cross the water and visit him? It isn't for lack of money. He is always busy and must be making a barrel of it. I don't understand; I never could. He doesn't care enough about me to want to see me, I guess, and I am all he has in the world to tie up to. Expects me to be a varsity player and a valedictorian, does he? A lot he cares what becomes of me! His letters might be copied out of a book, for all the real father there is in them!"

Perry Robinson, overtaken by unhappiness, wandered out of his gaudily decorated quarters to seek cheering companionship elsewhere. He was about to sally forth in the endeavor to get away from himself, when a tall, sallow sophomore clumped in, emitting cigarette smoke and loud conversation, the burden of which was:

"Greatest game on for to-night you ever heard in your life, Pretty! Supper at Bill Hamlin's road house. Ten of us are going—a limousine chartered—lots of hooch! You are one of the crowd—we won't go home until morning. Hooray get into your coat, old bean!"

Perry stooped to pick up his father's letter and his eye caught the words, "expect to hear of your playing on the varsity field before the end of the season." Only three days before, he had been dismissed in disgrace from his class team for rioting on the campus after midnight. Well, it made no difference now; he would go the pace and try to forget some things that made him ashamed and uneasy. So he made ready response:

"Sure, old man! I am just about due to get a genial jag on. Are you sure we've got enough? My thirst is something awful."

"Plenty of liquor at Bill Hamlin's—rye and gin," cried the other. "I picked up a colored gentleman with a guitar and we'll have a songfest all the way. Eat, drink and be merry—eh, Perry? We are young only once!"

A little later in the afternoon, the

sporty sophomore crowd rode down Chapel Street. Jim Stearns, captain of the varsity eleven, was crossing the Green on his way to the campus, in company with Peter Burnham, the crack pitcher of the college. He halted to gaze after the noisy crowd in the machine with an expression of great displeasure.

"There's a useless crew," said Jim. "I never saw such a half-baked lot of imitation sports! Their class must be awfully soured on them, Peter. What makes me tired is to see that young Robinson traveling in such cheap company. He was playing on the sophomore team and I kept an eye on him for some time. He was green, of course, but so plucky and fast on his feet that I had a notion of trying him out behind the line. Too bad he went to smash! Couldn't be trusted to keep training. I think I'll look him up tomorrow. A line of straight talk from me may make him see what a fool he is."

"I know him by sight. He played some baseball at school, so I was told," growled Peter Burnham; "but at this rate he will never be of any use to me. Go talk to him like a Dutch uncle, Jim. I haven't enough tact and patience to do missionary work. What are mothers and fathers thinking of, to turn boys loose to shift for themselves without any ballast?"

UNWITTING that he had attracted even the passing notice of the two "biggest men" in college, Perry Robinson, gayest and loudest of the party, soon afterward struck up the chorus:

"My comrades, when I'm no more drinking,
But sick with gout or palsy lie,
Exhausted on my sick bed sinking,
Believe me, then my end is nigh.

"And when me to my grave you're bringing,
Then follow after, man by man;
Let no sad funeral bells be ringing,
But tinkling glasses be your plan."

Tunefully proclaiming this and similar sentiments as their philosophy of life, the sophomores raced along to the road house. The stars were shining when they came to their destination and greeted the waiting landlord with exuberant harmony, which assured him that:

"We meet again to-night, boys, with mirth and song;
Let melody flow, wherever we go!
We dwell in friendship ever, so true and strong,
And sorrow never know."

They had no need of alcohol—these happy, careless college men. The heady joy of being alive and out for a frolic together was intoxicating in itself. They were too young to think of yesterdays or to-morrows, too irresponsible to concern themselves with consequences. Perry Robinson, for one, had thrown away all regrets and, as the company danced into Bill Hamlin's low-raftered dining room, he was convinced that such occasions as this made going to college worth while. Standing upon his chair at one end of the long table, he began to sing and his flushed face and shining eyes told that he was not quite sober:

"Let every good fellow now fill up his glass,
Vive la compagnie!
And drink to the health of his favorite lass,
Vive la compagnie!"

Loud cheering, more toasts and a clamorous demand that Perry preside over this jovial feast followed his musical outburst. Two hours later, ten sophomores were trying to make speeches at the same instant and stout Bill Hamlin was grinning in the doorway while he watched a wholesale wreckage of his china and glassware which would figure in the bill at double their cost. The colored virtuoso plunked away at his guitar and no one paid the least attention to his honeyed chords; but he beamed ecstatically, for he had a bottle at his elbow and crooned

rag-time choruses for his own delectation.

Later in the evening the party came to that state of vinous exhilaration wherein each was absorbed in doing a particular "stunt" of his own, whether or not he had an audience. Perry Robinson persisted in making impassioned speeches as toast master, until all his comrades had vanished to hold an "athletic carnival" on the lawn; whereupon he felt himself to be grossly slighted and, to his own surprise, began to weep bitter tears. From sadness unutterable his mood shifted to grim determination to do some desperate deed and he passed out into the darkness to think it over.

His head was spinning like a top and he found it oddly difficult to lay hold of an idea long enough to see what it looked like; but he managed to cling to the conviction that Yale College had used him basely and that he must be revenged. After strenuous effort he gained a hearing between heats of a three-legged race and said, brokenly:

"What has our glorious class done to let the college know we are alive? Nothing—nit—not a thing. We haven't the spirit of a—of a woolly sheep. Here we are—yes, here we are!—right here—the only thoroughbred sports among two hundred sophomores. 'Rah for us! Now what we want to do is to go back to town and tear the campus wide open. Let's make 'em date their letters from to-night, eh? I have the scheme, right under my hat. Get busy and gather all the empty bottles there are in this whole blamed 'stablishment. Bill Hamlin will give us some baskets."

THE flagging energies of the rather befuddled students needed such fresh impetus as this vague proposition offered and with yells of approval they cleared the cellar and the disordered dining room of bottles and fled to the machine. It was after midnight when they disembarked near the campus and lugged their laden baskets through the nearest gateway. The rows of dormitories were darkened, the walks and grass plots deserted. The time and place were ripe for shattering the cloistered peace that brooded beneath the shadowy elms of the quadrangle.

Perry Robinson, a trifle unsteady on his feet, but glib of tongue, leaned against the nearest fence post and beckoned his allies around him, while he croaked hoarsely:

"Two men to a basket, understand? When I give the word, we divide forces and run straight down the walk all the way to the chapel. Half of us bombard one side, the rest smash windows on the other. Throw the bottles as hard as you can. Give 'em hell! We'll treat 'em all alike—tutors, seniors, everybody. Biff—bang! Let's go!"

Instantly the destroyers swept full tilt over the campus, while from either side there arose an infernal din of shattered windows, as the bottles were swiftly hurled. An earthquake could have spread no more consternation among the virtuous undergraduates who were suddenly awakened by this prodigious racket. Gasping with laughter, as though this were the most side-splitting jest ever devised, the sophomores continued to smash windows at short range, until their ammunition was spent and the chapel loomed up just ahead of them. Then, instead of bolting through into Elm Street and cannily dispersing, they lingered to cheer for their class and otherwise voice their hilarious defiance.

Presently outraged occupants of rooms which had suffered bombardment began to dash out of hallways, taking three stairs at a leap. The night air had begun to sober most of the rioters and they straightway took to their heels; but Perry Robinson stood his ground and defied all comers.

It was burly Joe Hoster, a campus

policeman, who snatched Perry from off the chapel steps, led him into Elm Street by one ear and held off the angry crowd of windowless students who were for spanking the sophomore and riding him on a rail.

"I know your name," said the pillar of law and order, as he took a fresh grip on his captive. "I been watchin' you for some time, mister. You were about due to blow up in some fool stunt like this. I am goin' to take you to your room and put you to bed, Mr. Perry Robinson, and report you to the dean in the mornin', when you'll be tryin' to scrape the fur off your tongue with a currycomb and wonderin' if you can get your head through the door."

This judicial address was roundly applauded by the spectators, who perceived that the Fates were dealing retribution in full measure.

Jim Stearns had been routed out of bed by a crash of glass in his sitting room. Jumping into trousers, shoes and sweater, he had set out in chase of the rioters. He was in no pleasant temper as he joined the group around the sophomore and the policeman, but he felt a twinge of conscience as he recognized Perry Robinson and he said to himself:

"It may be partly my fault. I knew I ought to get hold of that chap and try to make him travel with a different crowd. But I put it off too long. He will get fired from college for this night's work. I wonder if he is going to give his pals away or fight it out by himself? I think I'll go around to see him in the morning, even though his goose is cooked."

LATE next morning Perry Robinson awoke from sleep and tried painfully to piece together the events of the night before. His head throbbed as though hammers were beating inside his skull; his hands were hot and tremulous; and when he tried to rise, a deathly nausea gripped him. Pulling himself together with a heroic effort, he tottered to the bathroom and took a cold plunge, which enabled him to bring his disordered wits to bear on the situation. His recollections of the night's entertainment were considerably blurred; but the fact that he had laid himself open to summary expulsion from college was not in the least obscured, not to mention the matter of payment for what had looked like at least a million windows.

After a rueful survey of his haggard countenance and reddened eyes, he glanced at his watch and discovered that he had missed two morning recitations. He would be due at a third at eleven o'clock and, resolving to "bluff it out," he found the Greek text book and tore out of his Bohn's translation the pages covering the day's lesson.

Some one knocked on the outer door and, expecting to see one of the other malefactors, he yelled, "Come in!" Very much to his surprise, in walked that demigod in the eyes of all students—Mr. James Montgomery Stearns, captain of the university eleven.

Perry stammered, apologized and was so confused that Jim said heartily:

"Sorry you quit playing football, Robinson. I meant to look you up before. No use beating around the bush, is there? My windows were busted last night and I saw Joe Hoster collar you red-handed. You are up against it good and hard. I am afraid you will be fired without any ceremony. Too bad, but I think you are man enough to stand punishment! That is how I sized you up on the football field. How about the rest of your crowd? What are you going to say about them?"

Perry Robinson stared at the floor, stirred to an embarrassing emotion by the frank friendliness of this famous college leader. At length he said, with a shy smile:

"Of course I shall say nothing about

the other fellows. I've been a fool, but I'm not a telltale. They can look out for themselves, but don't you think they ought help pay for the windows?"

"Sure thing!" answered Stearns. "And it is mighty square of you to look at it as you do. Some fellows would be tempted to divide the blame. What are you going to do if you have to quit Yale?"

The tall football captain hesitated, appeared ill at ease and resumed:

"I don't mean to lecture a man when he is down, Robinson. Perhaps I ought not to have butted in at all. But you don't seem to have the right kind of friends, and—really there isn't anything in this raising the devil and playing the sport. I'm not one of the senior class deacons, understand; but I hate to see a good man go wrong. If you enter some other college, I wish you'd let me keep in touch with you. I'd like to help you if I can. I'm no model youth; I came pretty near being fired from the crew last season, for insubordination and making a blithering fool of myself. You may have heard about it—and I was stroking the boat, at that. So you see I am not very much better than you, but perhaps I've learned more sense because I have been at Yale longer and know the ropes. How is your father going to take the bad news?"

The sophomore's nerves were unstrung and his lip quivered as he made answer:

"It's b-bully of you to take an interest in me! I don't deserve it. I wish I c-could have known you before. M-my father will want to kill me, I suppose. I haven't seen him in six years. He lives abroad and writes me lectures instead of letters. I haven't got round to thinking about him. I have been knocked about in school and camping with a tutor summers and left to grow up any old way—for all he cares."

"Better dig up the price and take a steamer and walk in on him and have it out as man to man," advised Jim. "It is high time you and your dad got acquainted, I think. He is a good deal more to blame for this scrape than you are. After you have seen the dean, look me up, won't you? I want to hear the verdict."

With a hearty handclasp, Jim Stearns left the unfortunate sophomore alone with his problem. In no mood for study, Perry tucked the leaves of the translation between the pages of his "Iliad" and plodded to the campus for what might be his last recitation as a Yale man. There was a flicker of bravado in this act and he carried himself with as much assurance as he could muster. His Greek division had assembled when he entered the room and there was an excited buzz of sympathetic curiosity while the hero of the window-smashing carnival sought his seat in front of kindly old Professor Seaforth, who peered over his spectacles more in sorrow than in anger.

Perry opened his "Iliad," in which he had cautiously concealed the two torn pages of translation and with this specious preparation waited in fear and trembling to hear his name spoken. As though anxious to give this disgraced student one last chance to redeem himself in scholarship, Professor Seaforth promptly asked him to read and translate ten lines of the lesson.

Holding his book very carefully, Perry looked first at the Greek text, then at his ambushed translation and began to read in stumbling fashion, as though he were digging it out:

"Why, Patroclus, art thou thus weeping as a little girl, who runs along at her mother's side, bidding her to take her up——"

PERRY paused, for the entire class was snickering, and in his alarm he looked up at Professor Seaforth, who ran his fingers through his gray hair as he said, with mild sarcasm:

"Very well translated, Mr. Robinson, but unfortunately the passage you have chosen to read in English is not the same as that which you previously rendered in Greek. They are two pages apart in the 'Iliad.' That will do. Please stop and see me after class."

Blushing to his ears, Perry longed to flee the hateful place. He had ripped the wrong pages from his "pony" and was exposed as a ridiculous, blundering cheat! It was the last straw and he felt that it made a fitting finish to his blasted career at Yale. When the class was dismissed, he waited sullenly until the professor laid a hand on his shoulder and said, with a note of real tenderness in the voice which was wont so sonorously to roll forth the stately lines of his beloved Homer:

"I was in the office of the dean this morning, Mr. Robinson, and learned that you are about to sever your connection with the college. I am very sorry. I had hoped for a bright four years at Yale for you. You have not been a studious Greek scholar, but I shall not reproach you. It is more important, after all, that you become a good man. God bless you! I was becoming fond of you."

With a shamefaced acknowledgment of the venerable professor's kindness, Perry left his presence and reflected as he crossed the campus:

"And he talked like that to me after I had fairly insulted him by an idiotic bluff at making a recitation! And Jim Stearns treated me the same way after I smashed his windows. Oh, I wish they had come to me sooner, instead of heaping coals of fire on my head!"

AN alert-looking young man, whom Perry knew as secretary to the dean, overtook him and asked him to be kind enough to go to the office at once. Perry knew the invitation for his death warrant and followed without remark. Again he found kindly treatment, genuine regret and disappointment, where he expected harshness. The dean, low-voiced, keen-eyed and very wise in handling the difficult problems in undergraduate life, sighed as he asked Perry to be seated while he read aloud a letter which was to be sent to his father:

"DEAR SIR: It is my painful duty, which I perform with exceeding reluctance, to have to inform you that your son has this day been summarily expelled from Yale College for drunkenness and wanton destruction of property. His previous conduct as a student was so unsatisfactory, both in scholarship and in attendance, that in the opinion of the faculty of this institution there are no grounds for leniency or a reconsideration of the case. He has impressed me as a young man of so much natural promise that I sincerely hope he may take this act of discipline to heart, as a lesson to help him in whatever you shall decide it best for him to do. In my opinion he has suffered for lack of home associations and parental control and deserves from you as much forbearance as censure. I subscribe myself,

"Very regretfully yours,
"HENRY S. WHITE."

Perry Robinson sat with bowed head while the dean slipped the letter into an envelope and laid it upon the table, with other mail matter, ready for the postman. The disgraced student could think of nothing to say and he awaited dumbly the word of dismissal, while his heart fluttered with dread at thought of such tidings being sent to his father. The dean looked at him with scrutinizing gaze and said, at length:

"I am not going to ask you who your companions were. I have learned that you were one of a party which drove to Hamlin's road house last night. The names will be reported to me through my own sources of information. Punishment will be impartially distributed. But of you I expected better things, Mr. Robinson. Mr. James Stearns was in my office less than an hour ago. He came to talk to me about you. It means something when a man of his stamp comes to intercede for another student. Professor Seaforth happened to be here

this morning when Officer Hoster reported your case. He seemed grieved and disturbed, as if you had won his affection during your recitations in his classroom. I am compelled to make an example of you for the good of the college. I am afraid this is all I have to say to you, except to wish you better fortune."

Perry nodded and tried to smile, but there was no holding back the tears and with uncertain step he went out of the room and down the stairway to the campus. Hardly knowing what to do next, he stood in the doorway of the entry, afraid to meet any of his classmates, afraid of the world in which he was a derelict. Presently the campus postman brushed past him and hurried up to the dean's office. With sickening alarm, Perry thought of that letter which was about to go to his father. He would run away, disappear, make his own way somehow. Such a father as he pictured his to be would disown a son involved in such dishonorable calamity as this. His mind miserably distraught, Perry was about to wander back to his rooms when the postman came down the stairs and missed his footing on the landing. He clutched at the rail to avert a tumble, the leather bag slipped from his shoulder and a shower of letters was spilled on the floor.

Perry was helping to pick them up when in a corner of the hall he spied the envelope addressed to his father. The postman's back was turned. Swiftly stooping, the young man furtively snatched up the letter and slipped it into a pocket of his overcoat. It was done on the impulse of the instant, an act of instinctive self-preservation born of fear. His father must not know of his disgrace—this was all he had in mind. He had formed no plan, but this fortuitous temptation and his ready surrender could lead him only into a bog of deception and folly.

It was inevitable that in the seclusion of his rooms Perry Robinson should soon discover the feasibility, not only of keeping from his father the news of his expulsion, but also of pretending that as a student in good standing he was winning the honors demanded of him by those cold-blooded, goading letters from Paris and Cairo. The boy took a bundle of them from his desk. Had they anywhere breathed of love and longing, of eagerness to strengthen and console him in time of failure and discouragement, Perry might have mustered courage to go to his father and ask forgiveness. Nothing that he read in the letters, however, intervened to save him from himself in this hour of weakness. If he could carry the deception through sophomore year, he reflected, things might somehow right themselves. Anyhow, he was safe for the present—and this sufficed.

As though to make this wayward path smoother and more alluring, a paragraph in the *Yale Daily News* chanced to catch his notice as he stared absently at his desk. It was part of a detailed criticism of the university eleven and read as follows:

> P. Robinson, a sophomore who joined the squad only this week, is playing a strong game at right half back on the second eleven and was put in for the last five minutes of the game with Amherst yesterday. He hits the line hard, is heady and sure on his feet and will be taken to the training table as a substitute.

Perry knew that there were other Robinsons in college, but this P. Robinson in his own class was a stranger. He must have entered since the beginning of the term. What colossal luck! The die was cast. After marking the paragraph, Perry wrapped up the copy of the *Yale News,* addressed it to his father and promptly mailed it in the nearest box.

"I don't know how long the bluff is going to work," he sighed, "but this

other P. Robinson has saved my life until I get my next lot of money and I suppose I shall have to write a letter every week to keep the game going, if I'm going to be a real liar and pretender."

ONE or two at a time, Perry met the companions of the mad "party." Because of better college records than his own, some of them were only rusticated; while the four who suffered expulsion promptly packed up their belongings and went home, to face their angry parents and to be sent off to other seats of learning. Perry shifted his living quarters to a region of New Haven remote from the campus and its populace and shunned his former friends. The tall, sallow youth of the incessant cigarette, who had beguiled him to join the road-house expedition, endured a punitive exile of three weeks and met Perry on the street shortly after returning to college.

"What's doing? I thought you had flown the coop long ago," said the other sophomore. "Waiting to hear from the dad across the briny?"

"Yes, I guess that is it," glumly replied Perry.

"Then come around to my rooms tonight. We'll try to cheer you up. There will be some poker doings and nobody need go dry. You may be gone, but you're not forgotten, old man."

"Not for me," said Perry, and he was conscious of disliking this fellow, who had been a boon companion of his. "The burned child dreads the fire. You needn't tell the crowd that you met me, either. It's none of their business if I choose to tarry in New Haven."

With which Perry stalked away and betook himself to his lonely boarding house. He had made sundry good resolutions. He would study so many hours a day, steer clear of dissipation, be careful of his money and try to atone for his blighted career while he waited for he knew not what. Punctually every Friday he wrote to his father —brief, perfunctory letters telling of his work on the varsity football field, referring to his excellent standing in his classes and carefully inclosing such clippings as referred to the genuine player named P. Robinson.

His father replied in terms of pride and satisfaction and inclosed two gifts in the form of hundred-dollar drafts, which enabled Perry to take his wardrobe "out of hock," pending the arrival of his next quarterly allowance.

He was wretchedly unhappy and a prey to worry, ignorant of what the future might hold for him, dreading exposure, yet lacking courage to confess to his father and have done with it. As the fall term drew near to the Christmas vacation, he began to lose his grip on himself and, in sheer hunger for companionship, became a frequenter of a quiet little saloon at a neighboring corner, in the back room of which honest pinochle players squabbled harmlessly and drank much beer. Among the patrons was a ruddy gardener whom Perry grew to like and the twain had many a congenial chat of an evening.

It befell one night, when a cold rain was storming outside and the back room was almost empty, that Perry's tongue was loosened by several mugs of brew and he told the gardener much more than he meant to reveal. Putting two and two together, the sturdy confidant surmised that the melancholy boy was not only an outcast undergraduate but also a masquerader, who ought to be rescued by his kinsfolk from this sorry existence.

NEXT day the gardener told his employer, who was, indeed, that benignant Greek scholar, Professor Seaforth. Putting aside the manuscript to which he had hoped to devote a precious hour in further tracing the his-

tory of the lost digamma, the gray-bearded professor replied:

"You were quite right to come and tell me, James. The young man as you describe him is much like poor Robinson and I am sure it is he. Bless my soul! Did you gather that he had seen his father, or gone home at all, since he left college?"

"He is scared to death of his old man, sir," replied James. "He hasn't even let him know that he got the sack from Yale. He is just loafin' around here, goin' to seed, and God knows what'll become of him. He's drinkin' more'n he ought to at the Dutchman's place and eatin' his heart out with misery and idleness. I took the liberty of botherin' you, because I know you take an interest in all the boys, no matter how much devilment they get themselves into."

"And he is living in a boarding house near here? Give me the address, James, and I will go to see him at once. This is the most extraordinary case I have heard of in my thirty years' connection with the college. The dean *must* have notified his parents. I am greatly puzzled and don't know what to make of it."

Perry Robinson was gazing from a window of his room when he saw a bent, shaggy figure crossing the street toward the boarding house. The flapping cloak and shapeless soft hat had been campus landmarks to many college generations. Perry dodged from view and waited in confused surprise until he heard the doorbell jangle. Professor Seaforth must be coming to see him! No, he could not bring himself to face this splendid old gentleman who had been so good to him in the hour of his open disgrace! Stealthily bolting the door, the boy sat breathless while a servant knocked in vain and trudged below to report that Mr. Robinson was not in the house. From behind the curtain, Perry watched the professor recross the street and vanish toward his home.

"I can't stand it much longer," groaned the lonely chap. "This having to act the shyster to a man like that is about the limit. Oh, what am I going to do? There doesn't seem to be any way out of it. I simply can't tell father now, after fooling him all these weeks. Being a rank pretender is simply hell and no mistake."

That afternoon Perry packed his trunk and sought lodgings in another quarter of the town, even more remote from the campus and all who knew it.

EARLY in the winter, Professor Seaforth was granted a three-month leave of absence, to his surprise and delight. He had been in fragile health for some time, but the Greek department was short-handed and he would rather have died at his post than leave his classes uncared for. The college arranged for a capable substitute, however, and with the history of the lost digamma tucked under his arm, he promptly took passage for the Mediterranean, to "loaf and invite his soul" among the isles of Greece.

A fortnight later he reëmbarked on board a much smaller steamer bound out of Piræus. Those of the tourist passengers who had genuine interest in the storied island which jeweled those azure seas were drawn to listen to the talk of the gray old scholar with the twinkling eyes and the genial smile. Under the spell of his unconscious eloquence, as he told in intimate detail what manner of men lived and fought and loved along these shores in the golden age when the world was young, the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" were reincarnated and thrilled with robust vitality.

One night when the sky was wonderful with stars and the calm Ionian sea shimmered duskily to the dim coast line, Professor Seaforth, wrapped in

his old cloak, was sitting on deck in company with a taciturn voyager whom others called "the judge." The conversation was really a monologue, for the loquacious scholar addressed the other with animated gestures, somewhat in this fashion:

"So you have been spending some time in Egypt, my dear sir? How very interesting! Egypt appears in the 'Iliad' only once, where Egyptian Thebes is mentioned as famed for its wealth and power. In the 'Odyssey' it appears more frequently. Thither Menelaus was driven by a storm on his way home from Troy; there he and Helen were entertained and received gifts—including silver bathtubs—at the palace of the king of Thebes and, near Egypt, he was detained, on the island of Pharos, because of his failure to offer proper sacrifices to the gods. The disguised Odysseus tells a fictitious story of leading a marauding expedition to Egypt, of wasting the fields and of being worsted by the inhabitants. I regret that I have not with me a copy of my monograph on this subject; it is used for required reading by my classes at Yale."

The judge sat up in his deck chair and eyed the professor with keen interest, as though this last remark were more enlivening than the dissertation on the Homeric age.

"So you are a professor at Yale!" he said. "Pardon my stupidity for not knowing it sooner, but I have been rather flocking by myself on board ship. Do you happen to recall a boy named Robinson, in the sophomore class?"

The speaker bit off the end of a cigar and lighted a match, the flare revealing to the professor a rugged, unsmiling face, deeply lined for a man of no more than middle age. The harsh voice had a note of earnest entreaty, as though the question were one of considerable moment. The professor was disquieted as he replied:

"There are, or were, two Robinsons in the present sophomore class. Oddly enough, they have the same first initial, which was somewhat confusing. I presume you refer to Philip Robinson, the football player, who entered after the beginning of the term. The other, I regret to say, was expelled from college about two months ago."

"What was the name of the other?" asked the judge, speaking with obvious effort.

"Perry Robinson, a young man of the most lovable qualities," answered the professor. "I have been and am still very anxious about him. Do you know him?"

"I know his father. Tell me all you can about him. Isn't there some mistake? The Robinson I mean is in college now and is playing football. I saw his name in the last newspapers sent me from the other side. Yet his name is Perry, not Philip. I can't believe it—that is, you must be mistaken. Why are you so anxious about him?"

The guileless professor replied, with serious insistence:

"I am sure of the name and of the facts. Perry was in my sophomore Greek division. If you are a friend of his father, my dear sir, I beg of you to urge him to go to New Haven and take the boy home. I have had some very unhappy moments on shipboard because I did not find him and look after him myself. It is a peculiarly sad story; but you shall hear it from beginning to end, if you wish."

The other man arose, walked heavily to the rail, stared overside and returned to his chair, as though unwilling to reveal emotions that fought for expression. The red glow of his cigar oscillated in the darkness. The professor began to surmise the truth, but he made no sign while he awaited the response of the taciturn stranger.

"Yes, tell me everything—all you know about this wretched boy," said the

judge, after a considerable silence. "I am a close friend of his father."

"I have several hundred young men in my classes and much of my teaching falls on stony ground," began the professor, carefully choosing his words. "I come into personal touch with very few of them. This boy attracted me, not because he was a good student, but he had a certain winning aspect and his manner carried an unusual appeal. His eyes were troubled and his smile was wistful, I fancied, as if things were going wrong and he had no one to help him right them. More than once I caught myself thinking of him outside the classroom. Strange as it may sound, when I heard by chance of his downfall, I was not only shocked and sad, but I felt self-reproach, as if I should have intervened in some way to safeguard him."

HIS heavy shoulders slouched forward, eyes fixed on the deck at his feet, the judge seemed to be in a mood of gloomy, unheeding absorption. Suddenly his thoughts flared into vehement speech while he dealt the arm of his chair a crashing blow.

"Stop a minute! He was expelled from Yale two months ago? Then he could not have been playing football for his college ever since; he could not have been making good in his studies; he could not be—— Good God, man, do you know what you are saying? Do you know that the boy has been pretending to be in college all this time? Do you realize that he is making a fool of his own father? The other Robinson—why, the contemptible little blackguard has been using his classmate's name to help him turn liar and cheat! What did they kick him out of college for?"

The question was spoken so savagely that the professor was startled. Honest indignation disturbed his placid demeanor as he replied:

"I have found it wiser to beware of hasty condemnation. Who are you, to sit in judgment upon this homeless, frightened, impressionable boy, not yet out of his teens? He drank too much in company that did him no good and he was guilty of serious disorder on the campus. But he would never have become a liar and a cheat if his father had not neglected him and refused him the confidence and affection that were his right."

The other tried to interrupt, but the professor silenced him with a gesture of such dignity that he held his tongue. Bit by bit the story was told as the professor knew or suspected it, until he had pictured Perry Robinson, alone, friendless, adrift, haunting the little saloon to find some one to talk to, driven at length to tell his fears and sorrows to the honest gardener with the sympathizing heart. The professor felt no pricks of conscience because he had tried to soften the boy's offenses, to make him seem not wholly blameworthy. He was familiar with the parable of "the Prodigal Son," in the English as well as in the Greek text, and his old-fashioned belief could see no blind chance in this strange meeting on shipboard.

With a curt word or two, the judge ended the interview by arising abruptly, jamming his hands into his pockets and walking toward the bow of the ship, where he stood gazing out to sea, a dark, bulky figure posed in an attitude of profound dejection. He was still standing there when the professor went below.

The deck became deserted, save for the officers and seamen on watch. Midnight was sounded on the ship's bell and the father of Perry Robinson still paced the deck. His bitter, consuming anger was slowly burning itself out in a sullen smolder of melancholy resentment and chagrin. He was still far from the spirit of forgiveness; but in

his heart he had begun to think upon the things told him by the old professor with the Jovelike front and the persuasive voice.

It was bad enough that his boy had been disgraced; it was beyond all extenuation that he should have sought to shelter himself behind a flimsy wall of false pretenses. But, as soon as he had ceased to rage, the inexorable logic of fact began to obtrude itself. It would not be denied and more and more it clamored in his ears. He could not justly judge this errant son of his, because he, too, was a pretender. Edward Sanford Robinson had been a judge before he exiled himself from his own land, but it had been a long time since he had fairly judged himself. But now the naked, ugly truth would not be evaded. It had come to life to torment him, to make him uncertain of himself, to blunt the edge of his anger toward his wayward son.

NO sleep came to him that night; his mind was a turmoil of forgotten things. Toward dawn he found himself listening to the monotonous beat of the steamer's engines and cursing them because he could not help repeating, in time to their rhythmic pulsations: "Like father, like son—like father, like son." His vocation of "international law" was a fraud, his enforced residence abroad a cheat, as he had represented it to his son. He was an unhappy idler, a wanderer upon the face of the earth, who dared not go home because he had forfeited the respect of those who knew him best. This was his cankering secret and at one blow the elaborate structure of pretense, whereby he strove to retain the respect of his boy, was demolished and made a mockery.

It was inevitable that he should recognize the hopeless inconsistency of his own position. His recent years had been focused in the one great desire to see his son succeed where he had failed—to drive the boy to clean achievement and high ambitions. The Greek professor, unworldly, archaic, dwelling in a vanished past among myths and shadows, had forced him to his knees—had made him grope toward the desire to take upon himself the guilt of the lonely boy, waiting in far-away New Haven for he knew not what.

Next day Judge Robinson sought Professor Seaforth and made the apology which decency demanded of him.

"I left you last night without thanking you for your interest in my son. You have probably guessed the truth. Yes, I am his father. You were right in blaming me for the disaster. Expulsion from college is not a capital offense. Lots of good men have lived down such boyish follies. It was the deception that broke my heart. But you tell me that he is afraid of me. I cannot understand it."

There was unwonted humility in his demeanor and his troubled eyes recalled to Professor Seaforth the aspect of the son as he had last seen him.

"You do not understand the boy," he replied; "but he has never understood you. Have you been as frank with him as you expected him to be with you? I am old enough to be *your* father, sir, and something in your manner leads me to plain speaking."

"I do not resent it," said the other, with a sigh. "I do not feel as I did last night. I confess that I am all at sea. I don't know what——"

"Of course you will send him a cablegram and I take it for granted you will see him as soon as possible?" broke in the professor. His glance was searching.

"Yes, as soon as—as soon as——" began the other lamely.

They had walked aft and were alone.

With a sorrowful smile, he went on to say:

"My boy must have been very fond

of you, Professor Seaforth. I fancy I feel toward you somewhat as he did. What shall I say to him?"

"Forgive him," said the professor. "It is not for me to advise you beyond that."

They parted company soon afterward.

THE next mail steamer bound from a Mediterranean port to New York had on its passenger list the name of Judge Edward Sanford Robinson. No longer had Perry aught to fear; rather was his father brooding how he might regain the right to demand his son's respect. The issue could not be evaded. He could not try to redeem his boy until he had first tried to redeem himself. No matter how great the sacrifice required of him, they could then fight it out together, shoulder to shoulder, unashamed and unafraid. They must make the new beginning in mutual trust and faith and the future could take care of itself, so long as it was built upon this safe foundation.

When Judge Robinson reached New Haven, he could not find Perry. After a tormenting search, he went to the office of the dean, who welcomed him with an air of surprised gratification and had no more than heard his mission than he exclaimed:

"I want you to know Mr. Stearns, the captain of the university eleven! Mr. Stearns, this is the father of Perry Robinson."

A tall, robust young man, with a resolute face and a frank smile, arose from his chair near the door of the inner office and gave his hand to Judge Robinson as he said:

"It is the greatest kind of luck that I happened to drop up here this morning. I saw your son only yesterday, sir. I ran across him by accident and was quite flabbergasted, for I thought he had left New Haven weeks and weeks ago."

"Is he well? Can you take me to him?" asked the father, finding it difficult to keep his voice under control.

"I think so, unless he has taken to cover again. I was taking a run with the crew squad—just for fun, as I am not rowing this year—and they trailed out Whitney Avenue. I saw Perry bob out of a boarding house in a little side street. I chased over and nabbed him before he could dodge and he was so frightened that he almost dropped in his tracks. I had the truth out of him in no time. He squirmed a good deal, but his bluffs were very flimsy. He needs you, sir, and I am mighty glad you have come to the rescue. He has gone to pieces pretty badly and I think he will surrender on any sort of terms. I beg your pardon, but he has got it into his head that you are a holy terror and he may take to his heels if he sees you first. I'll be glad to corner him and hold him for you and kind of break it to him gently, if you like."

Jim Stearns fetched up in some confusion at his "nervy" speech, but there was no resentment in Judge Robinson's demeanor as he replied:

"He will not find me a holy terror, Mr. Stearns. There has been much misunderstanding on both sides. Professor Seaforth has told me of your interest in Perry. Will it be convenient for you to meet me at the New Haven House in fifteen minutes or so?"

JIM withdrew tactfully and Judge Robinson drew his chair up to the dean.

"The boy is not to blame; I am the chief culprit. If I can convince you that mine is the greater fault and that hereafter I shall try to atone for the years in which I have let him go adrift, will you consider giving him another chance? It is what I wish more than anything else in the world."

The dean looked up at the judge with an expression of shrewd, kindly toler-

ance, as though his ripened years had taught him to look for the good in all men.

"I have suspected that you should have shared in his punishment," he said slowly. "Yes, I am willing to hear anything you have to say in your own behalf—or in his."

"There was a man who held honorable place as a member of the judiciary," confessed the judge, speaking with difficulty. "He was ambitious for wealth and a great corporation tempted him, not by direct bribery, but by means of opportunities for speculation. A reform crusade brought the facts to light. He had done nothing for which he could be held in law; but popular outcry made him a target and he could not bear to stay in his own community. He went abroad to live, taking with him the wealth acquired in this way. His only son grew up in the belief that his father was an expert practitioner of international law who had chosen to employ himself in Paris. Of the two pretenders, which has been the greater sinner —Perry Robinson, or his father? I am ready to hand back my fortune to those who made it for me and to return to my old home and make a fresh start. This is what my boy's expulsion from college has made me decide to do. Ought it not to count in his favor?" The judge strained forward in his chair, scowling at the dean, his grim face paler than was its wont.

"It has cost you much suffering to tell me this," was the dean's reply. "It is you who have earned for him another chance. Bring him to see me tomorrow." The dean silently offered his hand to the judge.

Of the meeting between Perry Robinson, derelict, and his father, there was only one witness, Jim Stearns, who later described it as follows to Peter Burnham, the black-browed, solemn-visaged university pitcher:

"I did not stay very long. It was no game for spectators. I laid for the youngster and caught him when he was sneaking out to mail a letter to his father. He hadn't received any cablegram to warn him. So when I broke the news that his daddy was coming along only a few boat-lengths behind me, he was knocked all in a heap. He tried to bolt, but I collared him and led him to his room and put my back against the door. Then he began to cry —his nerve was all gone, anyhow—and I got busy and swore that, so far as I could size it up, his father had no intention of eating him alive, but was ready to serve up the fatted calf in any style desired. The fellow wouldn't listen to me, Peter; he was scared out of his wits.

"Pretty soon I looked out of a window and saw the old man coming along the sidewalk, slower and slower, as if he were none too easy in his own mind and wanted a little more time to figure it out. Then he looked up, waved his hand at me, put on steam and trotted up the front steps with a smile that just lighted him up. I tell you, it was better than all the plays that you ever paid two dollars a seat for.

"'Is he coming?' croaked young Perry, in a die-away voice and looking as if he wanted to crawl under the bed. He was as white as chalk, and shaking all over.

"'Sure, and he's coming with the glad hand, if I know the signs,' said I, and with that I opened the door.

"The old man came pounding into the room and never saw me at all. He grabbed the boy and they shook hands like a pair of pump handles hitched to a motor, until I thought they'd wear each other to a standstill. The judge looked —well, Peter, he has one of those naturally grouchy faces—something like yours, though you can't help it—and it takes a good deal to loosen it up. But if you knew how you looked after you won that twelve-inning Princeton game

and then multiplied the happiness in your face about three times, you might guess how the old man appeared. The boy was happy, too, but still half scared and on his guard and he could only gulp and stammer and wipe his eyes and wonder what was coming next. The first words he could muster were, 'But you don't know it all.'

"'Every bit of it!' shouted his daddy. 'And I've wiped it all off the slate! Here is where you make a new start and I am going to fight it out with you. The past is dead and done for. Now, sit down and tell me what you want to do with yourself. I have come home to stay.'

"Perry blinked and looked as if he couldn't stand up under so much good news hurled at him all at once and then he lit up with a trembly smile that made me feel like pawing for my handkerchief. It was time for me to come away, Peter. So I made a quiet sneak; but bless your soul, they wouldn't have heard me if I had fallen downstairs and kicked the front door off the hinges! I left them sitting side by side on the sofa and Perry didn't look a bit afraid of being chewed up by his parent."

"Good work, Jim!" said taciturn Peter Burnham. "Glad you had a hand in it. I liked the boy from the start. So old 'Digamma' Seaforth was the god from the machine! Chasing the youngster's father home was a good deal bigger job than rummaging after Homer's musty heroes, though I suppose you couldn't make old Digamma think so."

"You're wrong, Peter. He would go from here to Jericho to help any one of us fellows."

"Well, anyhow"—and Peter's tone was final—"I am going to bet Yale will be proud of that Robinson kid yet. It's a wise father that knows his own son and, from what you tell me, they are going to do some teamwork that will be hard to beat."

"It strikes me that being expelled from college has done them both a whole lot of good," said Jim Stearns.

Another story by Mr. Paine will appear in an early issue of POPULAR.

MAKING THE WORK EASY

SAMUEL G. WYETH, of Washington, lawyer and champion bridge-whist player, has a mighty admiration for the stalwart, barrel-chested, upstanding, two-fisted type of fighting American. Possessing a saucer-shaped chest and a wasplike waist himself, he has striven all his life to make his son, Samuel, Jr., the impersonation of his ideal of what a man should be physically. In line with that ambition, he last summer sent young Sam to a Wisconsin lumber camp, there to harden his muscles and deepen his chest by outdoing the deeds of men who handle an ax as the average man swings a walking stick.

The first day all went well with Sam, Jr., who was at one end of a crosscut saw, with a Goliathlike lumberman at the other. Sam had grit and athletic training and he pulled manfully on the saw, although by three o'clock in the afternoon his backbone felt like a red-hot lightning rod and his eyes like exploding Roman candles. But the next day, with his muscles stiff as ice, it was a different story. The lumberman, his hairy arms working like pistons, was industrious and silent for the first two hours of it, after which he felt impelled to speech.

"Say, young feller," he said, in a fatherly tone, "I ain't kickin' erbout your ridin' on this saw, but, ef it's jest the same to you, I wish you'd keep your feet off the ground!"

The Winner Picker

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "Mrs. Sweeny's Boss," "The Tip on Rosebud," Etc.

With her sympathetic understanding of human nature, Belle Sweeny takes a page from the book of heroes, and illustrates its story for the Boarder, with an ex-crook and his "girl."

"I WON'T have no corn on the cob," said Mrs. Sweeny decisively. "Whenever I see ladies eatin' it, I feel puffec'ly sure that they'll have to go home and wash their necks afterward. What, with twistin' them cobs around, like some of them does—— Nope, mister, I'll have some lima beans, instead."

The Boarder had taken Mrs. Sweeny out to dinner. For some time past, she had been melancholy because of the continued and depressing stringency peculiar to her financial affairs. She had moped about the house, with no interest in life, and her usual entertaining chatter was stilled. The Boarder, in order to break the spell, invited her to dine with him in one of the big downtown restaurants—a proposition which she had accepted only after much objection.

"The gang will dope it out that you and me is gettin' serious if we get to paradin' through the While Light district together," she told him. "There's always them folks around that can't see no farther than the ends of their noses —but their noses is awful long. And a widow lady can't be too careful. I got troubles enough already and I don't want no more. Why, it seems that life's just one darn thing after another, as the feller said."

In the end, however, the lure of her old stamping grounds overcame her fear of criticism and she accompanied the Boarder to the ornate restaurant. And now they were in the midst of ordering dinner.

"When you see a lady eatin' corn on the cob in a place like this," she continued, "you can make up your mind that she's either with her husban', or somebody else she don't care nothin' much for."

She suddenly became intensely interested in two people who had taken seats at a near-by table. One was a sweet-faced girl of perhaps twenty-two; her companion was a slim, undersized fellow, who might be ten years her senior, but appeared much older than that. His face was thin and long and sharp and there was a hardness about his mouth and a sallowness of complexion that suggested dissipation—yes, more than that, prison.

Mrs. Sweeny intently regarded the pair for a time. They seemed to fascinate her. The Boarder, watching her, saw her lips move and an expression of deep sympathy come into her face.

"Say," she suddenly exclaimed, turning to him, "ain't it too bad!" There was more of assertion than question in her tone.

"I might give an opinion, if I knew what you are talking about," he hinted.

She included the couple in a quick gesture.

"Them," she whispered.

"What of them?" he asked.

"Why, that's 'Bugs' McGahan!" she explained, as if no further identification was necessary.

The Boarder waited.

"Don't you remember about him?" she queried.

"No," he replied blankly.

"Of course you don't," she admitted, "not bein' in our set. But all of Broadway does, you bet; they remember him better'n the names of the small towns they came from. If you want me to, I'll tell you about him while we're spoilin' the looks of that four dollars' worth of high livin' that the waiter's bringin'. What?"

"Proceed," the Boarder told her.

"I'll tell the manager to come and bite you if you talk like that!" she snapped. "You're makin' a noise like bein' kept in after school—and Mrs. Sweeny ain't recitin' her g'ography lesson. Proceed—oh, *very* well!"

The Boarder laughed. "I'd like to hear about those people, Mrs. Sweeny. Won't you tell me?" he besought.

"Now you're human," she declared. "Well, Bugs ain't been out of Sing Sing long—I didn't know he was out yet—— Oh, you poor Bugs!" She fell silent for a moment, as if debating something within herself.

"I don't know as I ought to tell about him," she said. "It never seemed right to me that people always has to pin a convict's past on his back, every time he's seen. But that's what they all do, don't they, mister? A man gets out of jail and folks says: 'Dear me, I rully am sorry for the man.' Then they gets busy and tells all they knows about him and a little bit more. That ain't bein' sorry, is it? I alwus thought that such talk keeps people rememberin' somethin' they might forget, if they had a chance to do it."

"That's one way to look at it," commented the Boarder noncommittally.

"A lot of our set don't regard him as a crook," she rambled on, "and meby it would be just as well to tell the whole case and not just that part of it that some folks delights to tell. That girl with him—she's the girl that started everything—she's his girl."

MRS. SWEENY gave the Boarder time to scrutinize the young woman. Then she went on with her story.

"Her name's Bess Murray, of that awful rich fam'ly out on the coast that has the big stables and tried to butt into s'ciety here by the horse route. You musta heard of 'em, because the papers was full of 'em a few years ago. They come on here for the racin' season with

more swell trimmin's than a hall boy's suit. And Bess was just about the most kissy-lookin' doll that ever hollered her head off at a race. When the home folks disowned her——"

The waiter arrived at this point with his wide tray of good things and Mrs. Sweeny ceased her narrative to inspect the result of the Boarder's ordering.

"Gee, this is livin', ain't it?" she whispered, as the waiter withdrew. "If you was only big and strong and han'some and about half soused, I could shut my eyes and imagine I was dinin' with my poor dead husban'. He was alive when all this stuff happened to Bugs and it touched his heart so that he offered the judge a thousand dollars of his own money as a bribe, but the mutt wouldn't take it. Sometimes them judges is too mean and graspin' for any use! Mrs. 'Gold Dollar' Cohen says her husban' is awful down on 'em for it—— Say, mister, please hit the Worcestershire bottle in the eye for not comin' to Mrs. Sweeny when she wants it so bad—— My, you're quick to take a hint!" she complimented, as the Boarder set the bottle before her.

"Bugs was livin' with Marty Doyle in them days," she continued. "Them two had a bachelor flat and that was the worst anybody ever said about Bugs, as far as I heard. Marty was the son of a rich father, who paid him liberal for stayin' away from his home in Kansas City, and all them two fellers ever done was to bet on the races. But Bugs didn't have anything comin' to him on the outside. He had to depend on his bug—the thing in his head that picked winners for him. Gee, he could pick 'em! That's why he got named 'Bugs.' You'd meet him on the street and ask him what horse looked good in a certain race and he'd say:

"'I got a bug that Sea Lion will win in the third, like a beginner in a poker game.' And, sure enough, he'd be right! Sea Lion would be the first in.

"Everybody was wise to Bugs' gift and he was awful popular with the gang. The only times his tips wasn't good was on the twenty-sixth of the month—that bein' twice thirteen—and on days when he'd accidentally spill salt on the tablecloth. After a while, he quit feelin' for any horse dope on the twenty-sixth, but he couldn't get along without salt, so once in a while he had to lose. But that wasn't often. He won and won and won, until our set got awful nervous, waitin' for him to fall down. Nobody's luck ever run good all the time and we figgered it that Bugs' would go back on him some day. But he kept winnin' and winnin' and us gettin' nervouser and nervouser and so——"

Bugs, at the other table, had glanced up, recognized Mrs. Sweeny and then dropped his eyes to his plate, a bit flustered.

"See?" she said, in an intense undertone, "He feels it! He thinks the world is against him. He wasn't sure that I'd speak. Well, I guess a lot of people wouldn't, at that. But when a feller cares so much for a girl that he'll—well, you just listen to the story of it, mister, and see if you'd speak.

THERE was some big race doin's in these parts when them Murrays hit Broadway. They had Bess with 'em; she wasn't more'n eighteen, then. And there was a big roughneck of a gold miner in the party, too, posin' as a suitor of the girl. He was worth a million or two, but he was forty and wore black whiskers that looked like a dyed whisk broom. There wasn't no class to him a-tall, mister. He was about as much of a match for that delicate little girl as a anarchist would be for a real swell, misses' size, cloak model. It was beauty and the beast, but, as 'English' Charley usta say, 'the beast was deuced beastly, you know.' Later on, Bugs got into the combina-

tion—he ain't such a awful lowbrow, is he, mister?"

"He has good table manners," praised the Boarder wonderingly, for he remembered several things Mrs. Sweeny had mentioned in that connection about her "set," but didn't follow any book of etiquette.

"Well, he had good raisin'," she explained. "He come from a good fam'ly out in Ohiuh, somewheres; but there wasn't enough doin' in that State for him, so he lit out for this here pleasin' village. And, bein' that he was awful flush when the Murrays come on, he was considered top-notch s'ciety by our set and got interduced to the old man and his third wife and the roughneck gold miner and Bess. The first time them two young people come together, it was all off, as far as Old Whiskers was concerned. Bess fell for Bugs like a grass widow for a college boy and the roughneck guy was runnin' lame somewheres in the back stretch, without a chance. Love at first sight is a fine thing, mister, and I'd be for it strong, if it only turned out good once in a while." She sorrowfully contemplated the two at the other table while she searched her memory for the details of the story.

"It musta been a couple of weeks after them two met, that Bugs' luck went to the bad," she went on. "And one day he went to the track with the little girl and lost his last five hundred. Marty Doyle said, afterward, that he didn't spill no salt on the tablecloth that mornin' at breakfast and, if he done it at all, it musta been when he was havin' lunch with Bess at the hotel. Anyway, however you account for it, Bugs was broke and, almost as quick as it happened, our set knew about it and so did old man Murray. He didn't treat the poor boy like one of the family, after that, and they say that Bugs was just spillin' over with proud and disdainful feelin's for the whole Murray bunch, except Bess, but didn't dare to show it. Can't you sympathize with him, mister?"

"His position was difficult," agreed the Boarder.

Mrs. Sweeny looked at him as if she wished that he had expressed himself with more emotion. Then she admitted:

"Yes, I guess that's one way of puttin' it. But Bess was a little thoroughbred. She just rubbed a fresh coat of glue on her arm, squeezed harder against Bugs and stuck closer. All the ladies in our set wondered at it, b'cause their idee is to stick to the live ones and let the dead ones go and make good again, or get a job in the street-cleanin' department. Our idees ain't so much different from other women's, only we don't try to hide 'em.

"Marty was a good fr'en' to Bugs at this tryin' time. At first, he staked his side partner to fifty dollars a day, hopin' the poor feller could dig up some hunches on a few winners and get his feet under him again. But honest, mister, Bugs was unluckier than a bank clerk. Them bank fellers usually draw a few fast ponies and make encouragin' killin's b'fore they get sent to the penitentiary or commit suicide. But Bugs couldn't find anything that had any speed. It was lose, lose, lose for his, every time he put down a bet. Why, some of the bookies—my Danny among 'em—refused to take his money, telling him to go and wait table in some 'ham-and-egg' place till his luck changed. But he wouldn't do it, no sir, not that gen'leman.

"Bugs kept on bettin' till Marty wouldn't give him no more money. Then he touched everybody he knew, pawned his clothes and things and turned every cent over to them guys in the bettin' ring. And it was the same old story—lose, lose, lose. The bug wasn't no good, any more. And, take it from me, mister, that boy wouldn't

have had any place to sleep if Marty hadn't let him keep on livin' in the flat.

MARTY was sure a king, for he paid all the groc'ry bills and squared for the laundry and let Bugs have cigarette money till he found it was all goin' to the cheap handbooks; then he bought the cigarettes himself, not bein' able to bear the thought of his poor side kicker roamin' the streets without no cigarettes. Yes, sir, Marty was sure an ace, all right. He would have kept on providin' Bugs with money to bet, only he knew there wasn't no use. The luck was gone; and he knew, as well as any of us, that there was nothin' to do but lay low and wait for it to come back. Bugs knew it, too, and everybody else knew he knew it. When he kept on throwin' money away, we all thought he was full of dope or plain crazy. Then it began to be circulated 'round that he had planned to be married to Bess in a couple of weeks. Later, we found out that it was true. And the reason behind his wild carryin ons was plain enough—he had to have a sock full of iron men to get married on and there wasn't no way of gettin' 'em but out of the bookies——"

"Couldn't he get work?" interrupted the Boarder.

"Work," cried Mrs. Sweeny scornfully, "work! What do you s'pose a bettin' man is a bettin' man for, anyway? Work! He's a bettin' man so's he won't have to work! It's in his system, bettin' is. He's been bettin' so long that he's forgot what work is like. He couldn't do none of it. No, sir, Bugs was a true sport and so it didn't occur to him to work. He just rushed up and down the easy-money route, really workin' harder than a sweatshop hand, but not realizin' it and proud that he was stickin' to the traditions of his class. Yes, sir, Bugs was sure a true sport—any one will say at least that much for him.

AND, while he was buckin' up against all that trouble, things wasn't goin' any too smooth with Bess Murray. Our set began to get wise to trouble between her and her pa. Sometimes it would break out when they was at the track and the old man never seemed to care who heard 'em scrappin'. He was beginnin' to hate Bugs for bein' broke and I guess the roughneck gold miner sicked him on. So, whenever Bess appeared in public with the feller she liked, the old gent would start somethin'. It all ended up at the hotel, one afternoon—and I got this straight from the clerk, who got it from two chambermaids that was listenin' at the keyhole.

"'Bess,' her father says, loud and mad, 'you got to give up that piker or give up me.'

"'Oh,' she says, 'ast me somethin' hard—that's too easy, pa-pah.'

"'Well,' he growls, 'what's the answer?'

"'There ain't only one answer,' she says. 'I got thutty-five cents in my pocketbook,' she says, 'and Noo York ain't no nice place to be in without no money,' she says, 'but, at that, look hard and you'll see me walkin' out of this hotel in five minutes. Kindly,' she says, 'leave my room, while I pack.'

"He went out and slammed the door, real turrible in his anger, which is the very words the clerk used. And Bess did just what she said she would. She put on two pairs of silk stockin's as baggage, stuffed a extra handkerchief in her pocket and walked out of the hotel. Wasn't she game!"

"I should call her impulsive," said the Boarder.

"Oh, you're too practical!" Mrs. Sweeny cried, in vexation. "Why didn't you holler, 'Bully fer Liz!' and show that you've a mind above keepin' your coat on at the dinner table, just b'cause it's manners? I like folks that breaks loose once in a while, as she did.

Only, I s'pose it wasn't a wise thing to do, being that Bugs was down and out and had troubles enough without her throwin' herself on him. Anyway, that's what she done and it wasn't five minutes after she left the hotel till she met him, on his way to see her. The rest of it happened so quick that Bugs musta been the most surprised feller in town.

"'I've left home on your account, Bugs, dear,' she tells him.

"'What?' he says.

"'Pop and me has had a fierce fight,' she says, 'over you,' she says, 'and I've shook the dust of that place off my feet,' she says, never thinkin' how foolish that sounds, on account of there bein' vacuum cleaners there which takes up all the dust every mornin'.

"'You ain't left your pa and his third wife?' says Bugs, worriedlike.

"'I sure have, Bugs, dear,' she says.

"'Gee,' he says, 'I wisht you wouldn't have did it!'

"The next minute"—Mrs. Sweeny's eyes widened with the horror of it—"she had jerked a bottle of somethin' out of her hand bag.

"'Bugs,' she says, 'I've kept somethin' handy for just such a time. I've felt trouble comin', Bugs, dear—trouble concernin' you and me that I couldn't hardly dope out; but I knew it would be somethin' I couldn't bear. So I got this.'

"She was talkin' so quiet that Bugs didn't realize what was comin' off. He didn't quite grasp whether there was smellin' salts, or what, in that bottle. She was kinda toyin' with it as she goes on.

"'Bugs,' she says, 'I could bear it when pop was mad and scolded me; but when you scold me like you just done, dear'—she put the bottle to her lips and drank—'I can't stand it—I want to die!'"

The Boarder stared curiously at the girl.

"YES," affirmed Mrs. Sweeny, "right there is the girl who done it. You wouldn't think it of her to look at her, would you—the sweet, quiet little thing! But she did, all right. And Bugs—say, he was just too sweet and quick about what he done! As soon as he seen the bottle go to her lips, he grabbed her in his arms and rushed her to a empty cab that was standin' at the curb. He hollers a number at the driver and tells him to drive like he was drunk. And all this, mister, without a cent in his pocket.

"Well, in about five minutes they draws up in front of a private hospital where they takes in men and women that goes crazy with drink and cigarettes and morphine—them cases that a big city sends out from what it is proud to brag of as its Great White Way. They call the place a sanitarium, but it's really a home where people can get enough health back to start in and do them things all over again. Bugs knew of the doctor that run it, knew of him as a graftin' doctor that would kill a man if there was enough money in it. So he takes the girl there, b'cause attempted suicide in New York is a crime that they arrest you for. And it bein' a police case, Bugs knew from the minute it happened that it would have to be hushed up and, as she did it so publiclike, he figgered that only a crook doctor would take the chances.

"When they got to the sanitarium door, Bess was gettin' in a awful way, and my, but Bugs was scared! Him and the driver carried her in and there's the doctor, just on his way out.

"'H'm!' he says, doubtful, when Bugs says it's a police case. 'I don't know about that!'

"'Name your price,' says Bugs, 'and you get it,' he says. 'Only do somethin' quick! She's dyin'!' he says.

"'It's too big a risk for me to take,' says the doctor, lookin' at the girl, who sure was goin' fast.

"'Do somethin'—do somethin'!' yells Bugs, half crazy by this time.

"'Well,' says the doc, namin' a outrageous big sum, 'if you can pay that much, I'll attend to her.'

"'Sure I can!' hollers Bugs, without a cent in his pocket and no outlook for a hurry touch.

"'Take her back, then,' says the doc, and the attendants carried her away.

"After that, Bugs and the feller talked business and the doc holds him up some more for every day Bess has to stay there.

"'Of course,' says Bugs, 'I don't carry that much money with me, but I'll run out now and get my check cashed. My cab's waitin',' he says, just as if everything was all right. You know, mister, them crook doctors is awful suspicious, not bein' on the square theirselfs; but this feller seen how earnest Bugs was and figgered that the boy was all right. So he let it go at that. And what does Bugs do? There he was, without a cent and in desp'rate need of money. And there's no place to go and get it, for nobody'd believe his story and he wouldn't tell on Bess, anyway, no matter what happened.

"He gets in the cab and a bright idee strikes him. He tells the driver to take him uptown to the apartment hotel where he usta live and takes a chance on the clerk not knowin' about his bein' down and out.

"'Timmy,' he says to the feller, 'I got to have a piece of money right away. Is my check good here, like it usta be?'

"'Sure!' says the clerk. 'How much?'

"'Three hundred,' says Bugs, takin' out his check book that ain't been used since he went broke. He writes out his check real serious and the clerk cashes it, for the race-track gossip don't get around to them slow-goin' fam'ly hotels as quick as it ought to. So there's Bugs, a crook for sure, havin' got money on a bad check, but fixed to give the girl a chance.

"So he drives right back to the sanitarium, pays off the driver and goes in. They told him that Bess hadn't died and that she had a fightin' chance for her life. But the doctor, when he seen how easy Bugs gave up real money, did some quick and heavy thinkin' and had somethin' to say.

"'A central-office man was round here while you was gone,' he says. 'Some one seen the girl drink the stuff and follered the cab here. Then they tips off the police. That detective's got to be fixed,' he says.

"'How much,' inquires Bugs, 'is that goin' to cost?'

"'Well,' says the doctor, 'he happens to be a fr'en' of mine, in a way—that is, I know him—and he was sayin' somethin' about needin' fifty to get a new suit of clothes with.'

"'All right,' says Bugs, 'I'll have the money round here to-night. I wasn't expectin' this, or I'd brought more with me.'

"'Don't mention it,' says the doctor; 'we all get in these awkward positions sometimes. If the man comes back, I'll hand him the money myself and you can pay me. Ain't it awful how dishonest them police is?' says the doctor.

"'Yes,' says Bugs, 'they're turrible fellers.' And with that he goes away, knowin' just as well as he knowed anything that there wasn't no detective to fix, but what was he goin' to do? The doctor held all the cards and it was up to Bugs to count out money and hand it over.

BUT he was game, all right. Bess was in trouble and he couldn't think of kickin' at anything that was for her good. As he seen it, he must do everything he could for her. He didn't care for himself, just so she had all she needed. So he thinks the thing over

a while and then blew out to Harlem, where he knows a restaurant keeper that ain't wised up to his bein' broke. They're awful farmers in Harlem and don't never hear no news till after everybody else has quit talkin' about it. This man cashes his check for one hundred without no question. And then, bein' two times a crook, Bugs goes and gives the doctor the fifty.

"He realized that he'd lost his good name and was facin' jail for Bess, but he didn't care. He didn't even think about it much. All he cared for was to get her well again and there wasn't nothin' he wouldn't do to make that happen. The gang's all callin' him a jailbird, now; but——" Mrs. Sweeny looked the Boarder squarely in the eye questioningly, as if asking his view of the matter. But she did not voice the query and soon was in her story again.

"It was only a few days till Bess was clear out of danger and then Bugs plans to get her away from that graftin' doctor. He went to a hotel and arranged for a nice suite of two rooms and bath for his invalid sister and he gets a cheap furnished room in the neighborhood to be near her. You can imagine that she's still in a turrible state, all nervous and kinda wild in her head. She had to be watched all the time, b'cause she kept threatenin' to do the thing all over again, bein' 'shamed to face anybody. And on that account Bugs got her a trained nurse and gave orders to the hotel people that everything suite No. 7 asked for was to be sent up.

"Then, more money had to come his way. The night followin' the day Bess moved in that hotel, a feller in our set named 'Duke' Thrasher wins a hundred and fifty off a roulette wheel in a gamblin' joint. Bugs was in there and seen him go out with the money on him. I ain't sayin' nothin' definite about this, b'cause it was never proved real good against Bugs; but Duke was hit on the head while he was passin' a dark place in Forty-fourth Street and that money was took away from him."

"Did they arrest Bugs?" asked the Boarder.

"No," replied Mrs. Sweeny, "for nobody suspected him of anything till the day that awful news went round that set our crowd crazy with surprise. Honust, mister, we just couldn't believe what we heard, at first. But when Marty Doyle makes his statement to the cops, we had to. I tell you, them was excitin' times!

"Bugs, it seems, got awful nervous b'cause Bess didn't get along as well as she ought to. He thought she was goin' to die and he just couldn't bear the thought of losin' her. So he called in specialists that charge a couple months' rent in a Park Avenue apartment house for a visit, got another nurse and went at the thing like a millionaire. He moved heaven and earth for that girl, mister. And all the time he had to keep dark, b'cause he didn't know what minute the police would be lookin' for him.

"Then there comes along a day when he has to have a big bank roll to stall off the hotel people and the nurses and the doctors and the bills for flowers and things that was comin' in. You remember he wasn't at Marty's place, no more, but was livin' in that dinky little room—you can see from that how much of that crooked money he was spendin' on hisself. Every cent of it went to keep Bess from fadin' away and dyin'.

ONE night Marty Doyle goes home early from downtown, bein' tired and thinkin' he'd try to get catched up with his sleep. About one o'clock in the mornin' he wakes up to find some one in a mask, holdin' a chloroform rag over his face. Marty is a big boy, so he gets out of bed and starts something. There wasn't any light in the

room, but the street lamps lit it up enough so a person could see a little. As soon as Marty jumps out of bed the burglar swats him over the head with a sock full of sand, or something. This hurts bad, but Marty is game and gets up to come back. Bing! He gets it again and the battle is over. But as he sinks down on the floor and his senses go way, he jerks off the mask the fellow wears—and it's Bugs!

"When Marty comes to the next afternoon, he found that he had been beaten almost to death. His di'mond pins and rings and studs had been taken, besides fifty or sixty dollars he had in his pocket. And Bugs had done that, mister. Yes, sir, he had gone and robbed and almost murdered the best fr'en' he had in the world—a man that had done more for him than anybody else; and all for that girl! Gee, do you wonder that all turf s'ciety was upset at seein' one of its members get in so wrong as that? Everybody was most awful shocked. If it had been just passin' bum checks, we wouldn't have thought so much of it—'cause a lot of us has done little things like that. But goin' back on a fr'en', and all that rough stuff with it, set us against Bugs real hard. He looked like a plain strong-arm guy to us, for we didn't know about the Bess part of it then—we didn't find out till later."

Mrs. Sweeny leaned back in her chair and tapped the table with a spoon.

"Perhaps it's a fool thing to do," she went on, at length, "but somehow I'd like to make things easier for him—for them—to bear. Do you think it would give him a little more confidence, or ambish, or make him feel better if I went over and recognized him, before everybody?"

"Yes, I do," said the Boarder, with decision, "and I'll go with you. There's a lot of good in that fellow."

"That's what I been thinkin'," she agreed, "and he ought to be given a show. Why, after the police got him, he wouldn't say a word involvin' Bess, but just sat back and told 'em to hand him out his medicine. The chances is that nobody would have known much about her connection with his stealin' if she hadn't insisted on gettin' out of her bed and tellin' everything she knew. Then, of course, it all came out why he done them dreadful things. I guess her story had a lot to do with cuttin' down his sentence from ten years to five. Goodness' sakes, mister, they had him charged with burglary and larceny and swindlin' and assault with intent to kill and lots of other stuff that I can't remember now! It's a wonder they didn't send him away for the rest of his life!"

"MRS. SWEENY," said Bugs McGahan, in a low aside, after she and the Boarder had openly recognized them, "I won't forget this. You're the first that has had the nerve—or the goodness. They don't make 'em any better than you!"

"Oh, you forget it!" she cried.

"I mean it," Bugs said earnestly, "and"—hesitatingly—"I wonder if you and the gent will go along and be witnesses while Bess and I get married?"

"We will," promptly answered the Boarder, for both.

Later, as they rode in a taxicab on the way to a certain little church, Bugs said:

"Old man Murray is sending me to Paris to look after some of his business interests there. Bess and I sail to-morrow and we're not coming back. It'll be more—congenial—there. The old gang won't be around to—remember—you know. And I won't do any more crooked work!"

"Well," observed Mrs. Sweeny, "I ain't so sure of that. If I hear that the president's house, over there, has been jimmied, I'll know that Bess is sick and needs somethin'."

Wise Gentry

By W. R. Hoefer

The particular god who watches over leather-fisted pugilists is not all dependable. Sometimes he cannot be forestalled even by waving a sheaf of greenbacks in his scarred face.

OPENING a pair of blackened eyes, "Shad" Rowe sat up painfully on the iron slats of the unmattressed cot and blinked at his unfamiliar surroundings in bewilderment. He was gazing through a very forbidding set of steel bars at a large, uniformed man under a cap such as he had once seen on attendants at the Bronx Park animal cages up in New York.

"Say," demanded Shad of the unheeding attendant beyond the bars, "who the—how did I get in this zoo, anyway?"

"Zoo!" A man chuckled near at hand. "You ain't in no zoo, brother. You're parked in the Loueyville holdover. And you got in with the help of some cops who brung you. Three of 'em. It took 'em all to deliver you here."

Shad rubbed his battered eyes and peered through the dim, early-morning light to discover that he was not alone in this place. Two figures, a short, fat one, with a bald head, and a taller, wiry one, with shifty eyes and a huge, misshapen right ear, were perched on the edge of the iron cot across the cell.

"I'm in jail?" There was a pained note in young Rowe's voice.

"Try bitin' them bars!" The fat man chuckled. "They ain't any chocolate ones, kid."

His companion, a young man of about Shad's own age, merely stared with hard, unfriendly eyes.

Young Rowe blinked again and swallowed painfully. His mouth felt like burning cotton and his head seemed as large as a giant balloon, but heavy and muddled. He searched the pockets of his sadly rumpled clothes for a ciga-

rette, but his shaky fingers encountered nothing but a two-dollar bill and an unused ringside-seat ticket for the boxing bouts of the previous evening at Broadway Bowl. And then Shad remembered.

There had been fights last night, good ones, too, and many of them. But they were not at the Broadway Bowl nor conducted under Marquis of Queensberry rules. It had been, Shad reflected with the returning of his scattered senses, a pretty rough evening. That first drink of what was reputed to be "the old stuff," but which had tasted like an even mixture of lye and horse liniment, at the invitation of a hard gentleman in a soft-drink parlor in West Market Street, had started the complete alteration of his evening's plans.

He had, Shad now recalled, dropped in at this strange place for a cool drink before going up to the bouts. But this one had been torrid and had reacted suddenly and with violence. Then there had been more, then a discussion, then an argument, a fight, a general mêlée, the clang of gongs and then oblivion.

YOUNG Rowe idly examined his two companions and, at the battered ear of the young one, his good-natured face lit with a companionable grin. The ear was of more ancient vintage than last evening. The hard-eyed youth was clearly a regular member of the cauliflower-eared gentry; but Shad had sort of a fellow feeling for all boxers. His older brother, Jim, as sports editor of the Louisville *Star,* made entry to all the local bouts and the participants in them an easy matter, so Shad was acquainted with all the home glove wielders and many from outside.

The youth across the way was clearly a boxer from outside and from more distant climes than Tennessee or Indiana. He was, in fact, a total stranger.

"You all weren't in my party?" offered young Rowe, in his friendly drawl.

The boxer curtly shook his head.

"Naw," said he, in a superior tone. "I'm a pro."

"We come down from New York," explained the fat little man importantly. "On the rods—and some o' these hick cops you got here pinched us and stuck us in here for it. I guess," he added, with dignity, "they don't know who we are."

"Who are you?" asked Shad, immediately interested in any history of things pugilistic.

"This here boy is 'Wildcat' Cleary."

Rowe inspected the swarthy fighter's dented hook nose, which was hardly of Hibernian shape or proportions, and grinned.

"And me, I'm his manager," announced the other, with a flourish. "Name's Mike Glaub."

"You boys sure pick on the Irish, don't you?" said Shad. "How good is Wildcat?"

"Plenty good, kid. We'll take most of the welters. We stuck a twelve-inning limit with Jack Britton and two papers even give us a draw."

"Where?" inquired Shad innocently. "Two Rivers, Wisconsin?"

Wildcat bent a surly scowl upon young Rowe.

"No, right in New York—New York—fella," he rasped.

"We got the newspaper clippings on it," said the manager, "but a landlady's keepin' 'em for us in our trunk. But," he added, dolefully polishing his barren pate with a handkerchief, "we had plenty tough breaks. Get set down by the New York commish for on'y lookin' cross-eyed at a referee and then we have to go and bust our wrist. Tough breaks we had, ain't it, Abe?"

Abe Silverstone, alias Wildcat Cleary, scowled and nodded.

"I'll tella cock-eyed woild," he

agreed. "Say, fella, when do they put on the feed bag in this jail house?"

"I don't eat here," young Rowe informed them. "I didn't register on the American plan. But, believe me, I'm going to check out of here just as soon as I can tune in the outside world." He frankly appraised the pair. "Why, are you boys flat entirely?"

"I'll tella cock-eyed woild," growled the Wildcat.

"Flat!" wailed Glaub. "We been trainin' on railroad cinders and weather. A dime'd look like a Garden wind-up purse right now and it takes twenty smackers apiece to even get us past them bars. That's how good we stand."

The easy-going Shad removed the crumpled two-dollar note from his pocket and handed it to the manager.

"Here! It's all I've got on me. But I'm going to have my brother get me out of here and then maybe I can do something for you boys. I've got an idea," he said thoughtfully.

After some shouting, he got the attention of a guard and had a telephone call made. An hour later he was leaving the place in the wrathful custody of his Brother Jim.

"You're a fine mess!" observed Jim scathingly, as he scanned Shad's battered features and mussed raiment. "I suppose you got like this saving a child from a runaway moving truck."

"No," admitted Shad, "I got shot last night with some liquid fire—but I didn't know it was loaded. Then there was a fight, lots of 'em, in fact; it seemed to be open to the general public at last and when I woke up I was parked in here. My error."

"I ought to leave you parking there until you get some sense," snapped Jim severely.

"That's what!" conceded the unperturbed youth. "Say, listen, Jim. Ever hear of a boxer called Wildcat Cleary?"

The sports editor nodded shortly.

"Sure! He's a good, fast welterweight. Why. Did you argue with *him?*"

"No, but why wouldn't it be a good wind-up attraction to toss him in with Tate McHenry at the Bowl next Monday night? Til Krone's looking for some one in that class, since the guy he had for Tate got sick."

"It'd make a swell attraction," admitted the sports editor. "Be a good, slashing fight with that socker Tate in there winging 'em. Show the crowd a new face, too. That is, if Til Krone could locate this Cleary in time for him to come from New York and do some training before Monday."

"He's already located—the cops took care of that." Shad grinned.

"Where?" asked the now interested sports editor.

"They got him located where he can be paged any time of day or night. Right in the city calaboose. Cleary and his manager, too. They were my roommates last night. But it'll cost forty dollars to get 'em both out of hock."

"You sure it's Cleary?" demanded Jim.

"That's how he billed himself. And, anyhow, I'm sure he's a glove slinger. He's got a nice big cauliflower badge to prove that."

"I'll tip off Til Krone and he can make sure," said the newspaper man. "He'd like to put Tate on with some good boy next Monday. Been having trouble getting Tate on, too, with that wallop of his. All the lads are running out on him."

AT noon, Til Krone, the club matchmaker, came to the jail and, after satisfying himself as to the identity and physical condition of Cleary, effected his release and that of his manager. He signed Wildcat for the main bout on the following Monday night and advanced the indigent pair an additional forty dollars on which to subsist until

they could collect their end of the purse. The sagacious matchmaker lost no time in completing the arrangements, for he knew a crowd-pulling attraction when he met it and this timely tip of young Rowe's now promised to turn an ordinary card of bouts into a high-class show.

The affable Shad, with his customary good nature and hospitality, then borrowed five dollars from Krone and took the strangers to lunch at the Henry Watterson Hotel and, after that, made arrangements for working out at a downtown gymnasium. There, with lively lights of interest and appreciation in his genial eyes, Shad Rowe watched Cleary go through a brisk and illuminating work-out with a local middleweight.

The Wildcat, Shad reflected, was more than good. A rangy, sinewy athlete who stripped beautifully, Cleary was a sparkling, two-handed fighter with lots of speed and skill, but what especially caught young Rowe's ring-wise eyes at the time was Cleary's craft and resourcefulness, much of it illegal —when detected. Several times Shad caught the surly, shifty-eyed boxer heeling and butting his sparring partner when in close. Twice Wildcat held and hit. Also, he had a marked tendency to foul with his elbows in the clinches. All of this, however, was done with such skill as to escape casual notice. These methods, used in a mere work-out, were unconscious reactions of ingrained habit, Shad knew, and a sure indication of tactics in the ring.

Shad dropped in again at the Watterson after the work-out. Glaub and Cleary, before continuing south to their room, waited for him in the lobby.

"What kind of a kid is this McHenry?" casually asked the manager, on Rowe's appearance. "They tell me he can hit a little."

Shad grinned.

"I reckon they told you the gospel truth, friend," he drawled. "Hit? He's won his last seven fights with knockouts and none of 'em traveled farther than the seventh frame."

Wildcat Cleary yawned.

"A lotta local hicks, huh, fella?" he asked.

Young Rowe lit a cigarette and beamed.

"You know Tony Bruggi, the 'Iron Man?'"

The manager nodded.

"He stuck ten rounds with Walker," Glaub said.

"That's him!" drawled Shad. "Well, Tate had a mite of trouble with him. Didn't get him till the seventh."

Glaub stared.

"But when Tony did go," young Rowe continued, "he went right through the ropes and almost knocked out one of the newspaper boys at the same time." Though Shad's grin broadened he was liking these visitors less and less. Not a vestige of appreciation had they shown for favors gladly extended nor had they displayed the slightest sign of plain friendliness. And Shad Rowe, even in casual battles like that affair of last night, was above all else a friendly soul.

THE manager's manner was a distasteful mixture of brusque, condescending familiarity and open amusement for his host and surroundings, while the surly boxer's was one of hard, superior unfriendliness and shifty aloofness. Yet the easy-going Shad, whose effervescent nature quickly recuperated from grating attitudes and personalities, left the pair with his usual affability and a word of hope as well as caution.

"But don't you boys worry," he said with a smile. "I can see that Mr. Cleary's one of the best boys we've ever had down here in Kentucky. I'd almost as soon miss the Derby as this fight.

Only," he added, with a nod to the Wildcat, "I wouldn't commit any butting or other rowdy stuff with Tate. Even if the referee doesn't see it."

The Wildcat scowled.

"Why not, fella?" he rasped aggressively, showing his teeth.

"Because," replied Shad, "Tate enjoys rough stuff. It makes him really fight. Well, so long, boys!" He left them.

He was back a few minutes later, however, to retrieve a forgotten umbrella, but what he chanced to overhear, as he approached the pair, wiped the forgotten article from his mind and prompted his concealment behind a pillar directly back of them, in easy earshot of their surprising dialogue.

"This Tate guy sounds like bad medicine," Cleary was saying, as Shad approached, "unless that rube was kidding us."

"He wasn't," Glaub replied shortly. "I found out all about McHenry while you and that Shad sap was waiting for me to put on the feed bag with you. I run into an old bookmaker friend o' mine outside the Seelback Hotel. Joe Oldanni, a wise old ginney. He got run off the Eastern tracks for some funny work and he's been messin' around the tracks down here lately. He says this McHenry is good and is got a sock like a hammer thrower. He is bad medicine. But"—a shrewd twinkle lit up the speaker's hard little pig eyes —"we don't hafta take it."

Cleary frowned impatiently.

"No," he remarked, with cumbrous sarcasm. "We could take a run-out powder instead. And toss away a nice purse, with us both as flat as a flounder. Or maybe I could toss the fight before McHenry gets rough—and have these birds out here use my neck to drape a rope on. They make you fight down here, a guy tells me."

Mike Glaub fixed his boxer with a knowing look and shook his head.

"No," said he, "it wouldn't be good dope for you to pull a flop, either—unless McHenry made you." He carefully lowered his voice and placed a fat hand on Cleary's knee. "But how about this Tate's tossing the fight?"

Cleary's shifty eyes sparkled at the suggestion, but his lips curled in derision.

"Say," he replied, "he'd knock you cuckoo if you sprung it on him."

"Not if he saw big enough money in it," said Glaub, with conviction. "They all got their price. And a price of—say —five grand would be big enough for this guy."

"Think so?" asked the Wildcat.

Glaub softly chuckled.

"Why, some ball players tossed a world's series for five grand, you boob! They all fall if you go high enough. And five grand is plenty high enough for this guy."

"Five grand!" scoffed the slower-witted Cleary. "And who'd donate us the five grand?"

"We don't need it—for McHenry," the manager explained, with a grin. "We might need as much as a thousand cash to sugar him before the fight. And the rest'll be in promises." Glaub winked. "And we can get the thousand and plenty of other money for bettin' from Joe Oldanni, after we wise him to the scheme and cut him in on it. This is a chance for a big clean-up, I tell you, Abie. McHenry's a regular idol here and they'd all bet on him. Joe could get twenty thousand down easy. And the odds! Better'n even money just on the result and as much as five to one on you knockin' him out inside of three rounds, we'll say."

THE Wildcat licked his lips and displayed his teeth in his sour grin. "It'd be a real clean-up," he admitted. "But do ya think you could fix this Tate and put it over?"

The manager laughed.

"We might have trouble with some o' them wise boys in New York," he conceded. "But out here in the sticks! Say, you watch me, Abe. Why, we're out with the rubes now. You saw that from this Shad fella. Look what he done for us—without gettin' a thing for it. Some sap, hey?"

A trace of genuine mirth stole into the saturnine face of the surly Wildcat. "I'll tella cock-eyed woild!" he grinned as he thought of the open-handed Shad.

At this moment, Shad Rowe, his features a mixture of surprise and wrath, was on the point of stepping from his concealing pillar when a sudden thought checked him. This was, as Glaub had observed, a scheme with possibilities for a big financial clean-up. There would be money, lots of it, in sight. The eavesdropper suddenly saw a possibility of acquiring some of it for himself. And, save for the meager remains of Til Krone's five-dollar bill in his pocket, Shad Rowe was broke.

He swiftly considered for a moment, then, glancing furtively about, left the hotel and in a few minutes was in the gymnasium where Tate McHenry was conditioning himself. Off in a corner by himself, beyond the handball court where a fast doubles game was going on, the husky Tate, a perfect picture of speed and power as his blond head bobbed rapidly from side to side, was viciously whaling away at the big sand bag.

YOUNG Rowe gave the briefest of nods to two amateur boxers who hailed him and rapidly threaded his way past the handball players and a cluster of spectators watching a work-out between two visiting heavyweights. He went directly up to McHenry.

"Hello, Shad!" greeted the boxer casually, as he paused in his violent efforts and waited for young Rowe in a lather of sweat, "What's on your mind?"

"Plenty," replied Shad Rowe. "But I've got to see you alone about it, Tate."

McHenry, a thick-chested, stocky athlete, with well-muscled limbs and a solid-looking jaw, grinned at young Rowe's unaccustomed soberness and began pulling off his gloves.

"All right, kid," said he, with a good-humored nod. "Be with you in a minute." After getting under the shower, he put on his street attire to leave the gym.

The suddenly secretive Shad led the way to a park a few minutes' trolley ride up Fourth Avenue and there, in the privacy of a park bench, he disclosed his business.

"What would you do," he asked, "if Mike Glaub came to you with a proposition to throw this fight?"

"That's an easy one," was the reply. "I'd knock him for a row of rusty ash cans."

"That's what you think," said Shad Rowe, with a faint grin. "But you wouldn't. Not after you got all the dope on it. Listen, Tate, there's a thousand cash in it before you even pull on a glove and then——"

McHenry jumped up and stared at his friend in mingled astonishment and wrath.

"Say!" he roared. "I'll bust you one, too, in about a minute, Shad! Asking me to——"

Rowe grabbed the already doubled-up fist and desperately clung to it while he poured a rapid flood of words into the boxer's unwilling ear.

"Listen, you wild hyena, before you get rough, for the love of Mike!" he begged. "This is the biggest and softest money you ever had a chance at. And safe as a national bank. Listen, I tell you, Tate! Don't be a damn fool until you get it all!"

He talked rapidly and fervently, against time and an impending wallop on the chin, all the while clinging to

the struggling boxer and at last, to Shad Rowe's vast relief, Tate McHenry's expression changed and he listened while the other painted a tempting vocal picture of sudden, easy money. "And we can bet the thousand and your end of the purse at nice odds," suggested Shad, as McHenry, a wavering expression on his stolid countenance, subsided on the bench and gave himself up to thought.

"Shad," said the fighter slowly, "I never double crossed anybody in my life, for anything."

"Oh, cut that virtuous stuff, Mac!" Shad returned impatiently. "It's a clean-up. A sure thing!"

McHenry, obviously wavering, sat silent for several minutes.

"And nobody'll ever know it if we keep it dark," went on Shad. "Glaub and Cleary won't spill a word, you can bet your last jitney on that!"

McHenry hesitated, colored guiltily, then rose with sudden decision and put out his hand.

"All right, Shad. I'm with you. But I never double crossed anybody before —anybody!—not even for a pot of easy dough. And I sure didn't expect to begin now," he mused.

Young Shad Rowe took in his companion's serious expression and laughed.

"Well, the first time is always the hardest, kid!" he remarked flippantly.

BROADWAY BOWL, the local open-air boxing arena, was the Mecca, six evenings later, of a horde of fight fans who began arriving long before the first preliminary was due to go on at half past eight. For Tate McHenry, the most popular local fistic idol of recent times, was considered by many to be of championship caliber and the flashy, scowling Wildcat, whose record and ability had been flaunted in the sport sheets for nearly a week, was expected to provide the slugging Tate with his most severe test in a startling, meteoric career.

The easy-going Shad, who had, as usual, arrived at his ringside destination via free transportation, fidgeted impatiently through the first bout, a crude affair between two heavyweight gladiators of dusky hue and amateurish attainments, which endured to the limit of six rounds. The next exhibition also failed to stir his customary enthusiasm, though it was a brisk set-to between a pair of fast featherweights with plenty of willingness, if not class.

The semiwind-up, though, was a vicious, slashing fight from bell to bell, the first real, blood-tingling battle of the evening. The enthusiasm of the crowd rose with the moon, which was now well up, a mellow disk of light in the purple, torrid sky. This was a middleweight bout, a sizzling, crimson-tinted fight all the way, with a stocky, red-headed fighter trying for a knockout with almost every punch and a rangy, two-fisted sharpshooter slashing his opponent's face as the rounds flew by.

The first trickle of crimson from the nose of the red-haired battler drew a general murmur of applause. The murmur thickened to an approving rumble as the trickle became a flow before the swift smack, smack of the soggy gloves in the succeeding rounds. When, just before the final gong in the tenth session, the gore-spattered, always crowding fighter swung from the hip and scored a clean knockdown, the throng was on its feet in a thundering roar, its appetite sharply whetted now for the main attraction of the evening.

Shad Rowe, however, restively wriggling about in his chair as he absently fingered the lonely half dollar in his trousers pocket and glanced about the packed inclosure, sat unstirred through even this bout. A few minutes later, though, his nerves leaped with the roar that accompanied Wildcat Cleary and

his fat little manager into the roped square, to be followed almost immediately by the aggressive figure of Tate McHenry and two handlers. Then the roar swelled to a prolonged thunderclap of applause.

McHenry, his sun-tanned, square-jawed face unusually grim and sober, removed the towel from his shoulders and acknowledged the vocal avalanche with the most solemn of nods. But the Wildcat, stepping between the ropes in a blazing bath robe, and his rotund manager, vivid in a zebra-patterned silk shirt recently purchased, were exuding the utmost confidence and waved a florid acknowledgment to the still-reverberating stands.

Immediately the crowd sensed the difference in the mental attitudes of the opponents. The raucous comment that peppered the ringside was often as facetious as it was brisk.

"He's a wild cat, Tate!" "He clawed 'Kid' Daley into a hamburg, kid!" "Don't let 'im bite ya!" "Hey, Tate, he eats raw meat!" The verbal volley came from all sides.

But the sober Tate merely looked more sober than ever as a handler sprinkled resin in his corner and crossed the ring to inspect Cleary's bandages.

"Make it look a little good before the flop," whispered Glaub, with a knowing light in his crafty eyes.

McHenry nodded grimly.

"In the third, fella!" reminded Cleary.

Again the thick-chested battler nodded, more grimly than before and, with his adversary, stepped to the center of the ring for the referee's instructions.

The noisy chatter from five thousand throats thinned like magic, it seemed, to a confused murmur as the lights about the stands were dimmed, leaving the small, roped square in the center of the packed inclosure a bright, stark patch under the glaring light overhead. When the gong sounded sharply on the still, humid air, the murmur faded to momentary silence as the stools were whisked from the ring and the boxers leaped from their corners.

It was a slow, apparently careful first round, with little zest in the action and entirely devoid of damage to either. McHenry, grim, watchful, persistently crowded in upon Cleary, his left hand half extended for a feint or hook, his famous right glove cocked at his side. The speedy Cleary lightly retreated before the advance and jabbed his stocky opponent with a flashy, but noticeably light, left jab. They appeared, to the watchful Glaub and the expectant Shad Rowe, to be acting their parts perfectly.

ONCE, in mid-ring, with the crowd murmuring for action, Cleary followed two swift jabs with a vicious right hook to the body and McHenry leaped in with a heavy right swing to the head. Then, in close, there was a swift flurry of gloves until the referee broke them from a clinch. But the hook landed harmlessly on the blond battler's thick chest and the swing missed a danger spot by inches, while the brief whirlwind of smacking gloves in the infighting mainly assailed protecting forearms and chests and was equally harmless.

Cleary grunted approvingly at his adversary's show of action, with its resulting harmlessness, and with difficulty restrained a knowing wink as they wrestled about, locked together. But Tate McHenry merely stepped back out of the clinch with grimly pressed lips and crowded in again carefully and with a hard light in his constantly watching, studying eyes.

Back in the Wildcat's corner at the end of the round, the pudgy manager sponged his sweat-lathered charge and grinned approvingly.

"Swell work for the opener," Glaub commented. "But we better get some-

thing more behind them jabs in the second. Draw some blood. Make it look good!"

The Wildcat half closed his shifty eyes and nodded.

"Might sock one in, if I get a good opening and put him away on the level," he suggested tentatively.

Glaub's eyes snapped in alarm at the mere thought.

"No, *no!*" he muttered nervously. "If you didn't get him with that one, he'd get mad and forget—and then it'd be all off, the way he can sock."

In Tate McHenry's corner, Terry Lee, his manager, studied the sturdy boxer with a puzzled expression as he waved a towel over him.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "You didn't get started once, looked him over the whole round. Think he's good as all that, Tate?"

"He's good, all right—if he really opens up," replied McHenry. "That's why I'm waiting. But I can get him —with just one punch, too, I think. He's a sucker for my left hook, the way he's always watching my right. But I gotta have the right spot to sock him in."

The crowd, too, was surprised and disappointed at the lack of action from the dynamic Tate, but excused it on the score of caution against a worthy opponent. They decided he was waiting for the right moment, so they settled back philosophically to wait for the following round.

The action speeded up a good deal, although still no damage was done to either fighter. Cleary gave a dazzling display of accurate jabbing and sparkling footwork and started a thin stream of blood from his foe's nose. McHenry unloosed his famous right-hand swing a dozen times and landed it with smacking sounds four or five times, but each time high up on Cleary's body, where the blows did no damage.

The crowd, though, was deceived into a noisy outburst at each of the rapid exchanges. But down in the press seats, Jim Rowe and the other boxing scribes noticed the lack of effectiveness on both sides and wrinkled their brows wonderingly.

"Swell stuff," murmured Glaub, at the end of the round. "It's got those hicks all fooled. Speed it up a little more before we cash in."

Cleary nodded. At the first opportunity in the third round, he fell into a clinch for a whispered word to his opponent.

"This is the round!" he muttered.

McHenry set his lips more grimly and nodded as they hauled and wrestled.

"Make it good, fella," breathed the Wildcat, with his close-cropped head on the other's chest.

"Don't worry," grunted McHenry grimly.

He stepped back and then winged over a savage right swing, then another and still another, the last one missing the point of Cleary's long jaw by a very slight distance. Cleary glared. Those heavy swings, that this chunky blond boy shot over so swiftly, were coming closer each time, it seemed, and he could almost hear them whistle as they passed. Cleary watched that right glove more than ever now, not merely from natural boxing instinct as before, but with an almost conscious feeling of trepidation. This McHenry could sock and no mistake. Even those punches purposely high up on the chest had hurt and sent him spinning back off balance several feet.

SUPPOSE, thought the Wildcat, this slugger got careless! Or misjudged one of those right-hand swings? Or—the very thought, of course, with this agreement on, was foolish—but suppose he decided to really land one! This Tate's expression was getting a little bit funny, somehow. His mouth

was even grimmer than before and there was now a flinty little point of light in those serious gray eyes that was dangerous looking.

With the thought, Cleary suddenly, on impulse, on sheerest instinct of impending danger, stepped in swiftly and, his left glove ready to pick off a counter from that dangerous right hand he had been watching so long, crossed his own right with all his force and speed for McHenry's jaw.

But Cleary had sensed the danger a fraction of a second too late and his punch never landed. For the blond battler had already started his, the punch he had been waiting with for the right spot, building up the opportunity by constant display of that famous right swing.

Only it wasn't the famous right swing that landed. It was a left hook, a crashing, slightly twisting punch, that beat the Wildcat to his own blow and landed with sickening impact on his partly turned jaw. The turning of the jaw, as he swung in with his own blow, was all that saved Cleary from a knockout right there. The soggy glove struck an inch back of its intended target, but, as it was, Cleary shot backward and landed, badly dazed, flat on his back.

MIKE GLAUB, not dreaming of anything like this, stared with big eyes. Shad Rowe, expecting and waiting for it all along, rose and howled like a young idiot, while all over the baking arena the sweltering mob was on its feet with a booming of sound that swept the inclosure like rolling thunder.

Cleary rolled slowly over as the frantic Glaub screamed advice from back of the corner. At the count of four, the fighter was on hands and knees, shaking his black head in a dazed manner. At "Seven" he was on one foot. At "Nine," with the crowd in a frenzy, he was up and scrambling into a clinch.

In that interval, his misty brain cleared. When the referee finally broke them, Wildcat Cleary, enraged at this violation of the "agreement" and sensing that now his sole chance lay in a sudden, desperate attack and a lucky punch, lashed out in a swift, vicious, two-handed offensive.

A lightning jab sent the blond head back with a jerk. Another started the crimson flow from the stocky fighter's face in a flood. An accurate left hook, snapped over in close, bobbed the slugger's head again; another jerked it yet again. The frantic mob was rocking the stands with roar on roar. Shad Rowe gasped. Glaub grinned his delight. The worried handlers in the local boy's corner yelled anxious instructions. It was a fight at last, a tearing, cruel, punishing fight that had the gore-thirsting mob in a stampede of howling, stamping applause.

"Cover up, cover up!" pleaded Terry Lee, as the blond head was rocked once more and then again and again with vicious, accurate hooks.

But the deep-chested battler merely grunted his anger and, with the battle light bright in his puffed eyes, bore in with swiftly working gloves that ripped and tore into the other's body in a pitiless tattoo. It was the Wildcat who broke ground and finally held on.

Again the referee broke them free, compelled to tear the fast-tiring Cleary loose this time, and again the furious smack, smack, thud, thud of the soggy gloves fell upon the delighted ringside ears as the desperate pair insanely battled clear across the ring. Once more, backed up against the ropes on Shad Rowe's side of the ring, Cleary held. Then, as the referee parted them and McHenry stepped back with arms held wide, Cleary, in violation of the clean-break rules, stepped in swiftly and, with a long, curling overhand swing, landed flush upon the other's jaw.

McHenry tottered on his stocky legs. The crowd bellowed its collective dis-

approval of the palpable foul. But before the referee could act, Cleary, setting himself for a knock-out, lashed out to finish his prey. At the same instant, that short, slightly twisting left hook, beating his own punch, cracked into his jaw.

Cleary's knees sagged and his head drooped. Then another punch, the blond battler's famous right-hand swing this time, crashed against the other side of the wilted lad's jaw. The Wildcat dropped like a sack of shot, rolled under the lower rope from the force of the impact and lay there, a limp, unconscious form, his arms dangling over the edge of the ring platform within a foot of Shad Rowe's staring eyes.

Many minutes later, as the last of the crowd was edging toward the exit gates, the Wildcat opened his puffed eyes and gazed blankly at the empty arena seats.

"When do we start?" he asked.

"We're already started—and finished," replied Mike Glaub, as he set the ammonia bottle down in the ring corner. "And if we don't both start again, to get out of this here town right away, Joe Oldanni is gonna kill us both."

Then what had happened returned to the Wildcat's aching head.

"That Tate fella went and took our money and then he double crossed us, hey!" snarled the scowling Wildcat.

The fat little manager rubbed his bald pate and dolefully nodded.

"He went and took our—Joe's—money and then he went and double crossed us," he agreed.

AS the last stragglers were disappearing from the sultry bowl, the Wildcat and his pudgy manager gazed up at the smiling, mellow moon that still lighted up the ring and uttered blasphemous words, long and fervently.

The following morning, Shad Rowe, bearing a suit case and bag, dropped into the sporting sanctum of the *Star* to see his brother Jim.

"Some fight last night," said Shad, lighting a cigarette.

Jim beamed at the recollection.

"Some fight!" he admitted. Then, eying the luggage, he asked: "Where you bound for now?"

"Just stepping over to Latonia for a while," Shad replied.

"Listen, Shad," said Jim, fixing the other with a brotherly eye that meant advice. "Why don't you cut out this hanging around the pugs and the ponies and that kind of stuff? I'm saying this for your own good. That won't get you anything. Why don't you get a regular job and settle down and be somebody? Look at young Herbie Pollock. That kid's got some sense. He settled down to work hard, when he got out of school here, and tended to his knitting and what happened? Why, his firm sent for him to go to New York! And now he's up there in a good job in the Big Town with the wise boys where the money and opportunities to make it are."

"That's right," admitted Shad agreeably. "Say, Jim, I reckon I better pay you back for getting me out of hock last week." He drew a roll of bills as thick as his muscular wrist from a trousers pocket and peeled off a twenty-dollar note.

Jim's eyes bulged as he observed the money.

"You in the stick-up game now?" he demanded. "There must be a couple of grand there."

"Thirty-six hundred," said Shad.

"Where'd you get it?" asked Jim suspiciously.

Shad Rowe tossed a smoke ring toward the electric-light bulb above the desk and returned the roll to his pocket.

"My cut of a little deal with Tate McHenry," he replied innocently. "We got it from some of those wise boys from the Big Town."

A Costume Piece

By Robert H. Rohde

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There was a treasure hunt—not the kind Captain Kidd used to indulge in, but a high society function—and in the innocence of its fun the Great Macumber discovered a hidden snake.

MANY thousands of words have gone, at one time and another, into the notebook in which I keep tally, in a shorthand all my own, on the off-stage and extra-magical activities of the Great Macumber.

Condensation is my habit; often the essential details of three or four causes célèbres may be found crowded onto a single leaf. Yet I think my very masterpiece of conciseness is exhibited in a page on which these seven words stand alone:

Hunted down—and done for, thank God!

The one sentence epitomizes a swift series of events and a prayerful climax which perhaps make it worthy not only of a mere page to itself but a whole diary. It is the epitaph of a supreme scoundrel. I need no other notes than this before me now, I promise you, to bring back in vivid procession the smallest happenings of that day among days.

My book does supply me, though, with a date which I find rather interesting. I observe, that is to say, that it was exactly one month after Macumber had bowed himself out of the episode of the Warburton jewels when I received the telephone call which I think should be the starting point of the amazing narrative in hand.

I knew that, somewhere and not so long since, I had heard the soft voice before; yet when the girl had murmured her name into the phone I must have gasped.

"You seem surprised," she said.

"Admitted. I'm astonished to hear you so clearly. They've managed to

give you a wonderfully good connection."

There was a little pause at the far end of the line, then she said:

"You say Professor Macumber is there? May I speak with him? Oh, it's important—indeed, it's important! I'm absolutely beside myself!"

"Certainly you may speak with him," said I, and turned from the instrument to find the Great Macumber regarding me questioningly over the top of his morning newspaper. "It's Miss Anthony—Warburton's pretty friend," I told him. "Must be an early riser. Just nine o'clock, isn't it? What does that make the time in San Francisco? Six—or is it five?"

Macumber was up out of his chair and striding toward the phone. In a moment he had turned and stared at me blankly.

"No one answers but the hotel operator," he said. "We've been cut off. Sure it was Miss Anthony—Beth Anthony?"

"Positive."

The Great One began to jangle the receiver hook, but had not yet won back the attention of the switchboard people when I left him to answer a rap at our hall door. My ejaculation brought him to me.

"Hullo!" he cried, peering into the dim corridor. "What magic have *you* been using?"

I still couldn't believe my eyes.

"From the Pacific coast to New York in less than two minutes!" I marveled. "How did you accomplish it, Miss Anthony? Have yourself telegraphed?"

"I—I don't understand," said the girl. "I telephoned from the office. Didn't you say Professor Macumber would see me?"

The Great One grinned at me ghoulishly.

"The lad's not infallible. He has a habit of taking things for granted and so thought yours was a long-distance call. We believed you'd gone home, you know. What happy chance keeps you here—and brings you to us? Come in, do! Of course I'm delighted!"

And then suddenly Macumber's smile was gone. He, too, had seen as she stepped falteringly into our living room that the girl's cheeks were colorless and her blue eyes brimming with trouble.

"What's wrong?" he demanded.

MISS BETH ANTHONY walked to the leather armchair nearest the door and, as if the few steps had taken the last of her strength, collapsed into it.

"I've come about Tom Warburton," she said faintly. "I'm afraid something has happened to him. And—and—perhaps you've heard we're engaged?"

Macumber nodded.

"I'm readier to express congratulations than surprise," said he. "I could read the look in the boy's eyes and, if you'll pardon me, in yours. I didn't think the distance between Chicago and the coast would be permitted to separate you for long."

"We haven't let anything separate us—not for more than a few hours at a time," said the girl. "Even my father couldn't."

"He's here?"

"Yes, he came East immediately when he got your telegram. Before he arrived, I'd promised to marry Tom. I won't say dad wasn't disappointed. He had other plans, of course. But I don't need to tell you that; you know why it was that I started out on my own."

"Certainly I do!" said the Great One. "And I'll never cease to admire your plucky spirit, Miss Anthony. I know that with Tom Warburton you'll find the happiness you're entitled to. There's no finer fellow alive."

Tears started from the girl's eyes at that.

"Oh!" she sobbed. "But if he's d-dead! He was to have met me this morning at breakfast and he n-never came! It's all too h-horrible!"

Macumber flashed her a reassuring smile.

"Many a man has skipped breakfast and survived, Miss Anthony. I'm still waiting to hear the circumstances, but I'm sure that nothing so serious as you seem to imagine can have occurred. Take your own time to tell me about it."

She stared at him helplessly.

"I know I sound a perfect goose. But I'm afraid for Tom. I've always trusted my intuitions and, I tell you, the strangest feeling came over me this morning when I sat there with that laughing crowd, looking in vain for him. It was—ghastly!"

Again the girl hesitated. Macumber, divining her dilemma, went to the rescue.

"Perhaps it may help to order your thoughts if I ask a few questions," said he. "I appreciate that you're upset; whether needlessly or not makes no difference. Where were you to have met Mr. Warburton for breakfast—and when?"

"At the Childs' place on Columbus Circle, at six thirty."

"Childs'!" repeated Macumber. "And six thirty! I don't know whether I'm more amazed by the restaurant or by the time. Aren't both a little—well, unusual?"

"It was a rendezvous for quite a party of us. The crowd from the Fenway Hospital treasure hunt."

"Eh? So you've been flying about with the Four Hundred!"

MISS ANTHONY smiled wanly and threw open her coat to reveal the spangled costume of a Pierrot beneath it.

"I do happen to know some nice people in New York," she said. "You see, I came to school in the East—finished here. And when dad decided to stay on and close a business deal he'd been trying to put through by mail and wire, I found my time more than well filled. Last night, before the treasure hunt, I was at the Junior Masque at the St. Swithin. Tom took me."

"And left you there, I gather?"

"We were parted at the beginning of the hunt. All the couples participating were broken up by a drawing for partners. Neither of us liked the idea, but we couldn't be spoil sports. I drew a Mr. Sanderson—an awfully nice boy just out of Harvard. When I saw Tom last, he was getting into a taxi with a Mrs. Kilbourne, and——"

"How's this?" interjected the Great One. "A married woman?"

"A very attractive young widow. Grass, I think. I knew her at school, but only slightly. She was graduating as I entered."

"But you'd made an appointment with Warburton?"

"Yes, three or four of my friends and their escorts were to meet at Childs'. I whispered to Tom to be there."

"You're sure he understood?"

"I know he did. And he said I could count on him no matter what Mrs. Kilbourne thought of the scheme. This was at one o'clock this morning. Tom promised that, treasure or no treasure, he'd abandon the hunt at an early enough time to see his partner home and reach Columbus Circle by half after six." Miss Anthony broke off, and I read the question in her eyes before she had spoken it.

"You know how a treasure hunt is run, don't you, Mr. Macumber?"

"I'm not certain that I do. I've had to do with a few, but they weren't exactly the same sort."

"They're fascinating. Like—well, for all the world like playing detective. That *does* interest you now, doesn't it? This happens to have been my first

treasure hunt, but I think I can give you the idea.

"In the first place, there were about twenty couples taking part in it and the entrance fees, of course, went to the hospital. Somewhere a prize was hidden. Just what it was, I can't tell you, for that was kept secret and Mr. Sanderson and I gave up the chase without following out the last of our clews.

"We all left the St. Swithin at one o'clock in taxis, private cars being forbidden. Each couple on departing was presented with a little card—and by a prince, imagine that! Our card bore a four-line verse with one of the rhyming words missing. That word, you see, would tell us where to stop first. Mr. Sanderson was clever enough to figure out that we were to go to the Hotel Ascot and, sure enough, he was right. At the Ascot, we were met by a gentleman who gave us another card.

"Now, being lucky enough to guess right again, we went on to a big apartment house far up Park Avenue. There we got a third card. It had been hidden behind a plant standing at the entrance and we must have spent nearly an hour hunting it."

"In which case," suggested Macumber, "I fancy you were overtaken by some of the other treasure hunters?"

Miss Anthony shook her head.

"No, we saw none of the rest after leaving the Ascot. That seemed to be first stop for everybody. The routes diverged there, so certainly they must have had a perfect swarm of people out during the day planting clews. But I think I've told you enough to give you the plan, haven't I?

"At any rate, the third card sent Mr. Sanderson and me off on a false scent and at six we agreed to surrender. In less than twenty minutes we were at Childs', but even though we were ahead of time we found some of the others there. As it turned out, none of our crowd had got as far as the grand prize.

"Now, it seems that this particular restaurant is favored because some one who really matters once said that the best wheat cakes in the world were to be had there. The girls insisted that I try them, but I made up my mind I'd wait for Tom.

"When he hadn't appeared at quarter to seven, I was really worried. All sorts of unpleasant thoughts began to push in on me. I remembered that you'd warned Tom against that horrible little red-haired man who was after the Warburton jewels—said he was a person who never forgot or forgave any one who had stood in his way. And then I caught something in the conversation going on about me that was frightfully upsetting.

"One of the girls had begun to wonder—and very loudly—what had become of Marie. I knew that was Mrs. Kilbourne and my ears were opened wide to catch the next remark.

" 'Why, she promised to be here,' some one else said, 'but I really don't expect her. You know what an accomplished kidnaper she is.'

"Then one of the other girls spoke up, saying:

" 'I don't think that she and her new young man intended to follow the hunt any farther than the Ascot. We all were distinctly told that all clews would lead continually into the north and I'm certain that Marie was in a machine that I saw rolling west from the Ascot corner and then suddenly scooting south.' "

LITTLE Miss Anthony pressed her handkerchief to her eyes again.

"C-can you imagine how I felt, hearing them talk l-like that?"

"Tom Warburton would make a rather large package for any one kidnaper to handle," observed Macumber. "I sincerely hope it hasn't entered your mind, child, that he'd be a party to his own abduction."

"No, no!" protested the girl quickly. "I've trusted him from the beginning and I'll trust him forever. It's absurd to suggest that I'm j-jealous. I'm afraid—that's all. And with cause. Let me tell you the rest. I waited in the restaurant even after the others had gone, stayed there until eight o'clock It was frightfully embarrassing after the regular breakfast crowd began to pour in, but I stuck it out.

"Finally I called up the University Club, where Tom has been living. I was told that Mr. Warburton hadn't been seen there since last night, when he had gone out costumed for the Junior Masque with his face floured and painted like a circus clown's. Nor had he been heard from.

"I had a struggle with my pride then—but there are bigger things in life than pride, Mr. Macumber. Almost before I realized the fight was over, I found myself searching through a telephone directory in a drug store near the restaurant."

"Ah! And you called up Mrs. Kilbourne? What did she say?"

"N-nothing. She refused to come to the telephone."

"In other words, I suppose, you were informed she was not at home?"

"No, a maid told me she was ill. Couldn't see or talk with any one. And that was a lie!"

The Great Macumber frowned.

"It has the sound of the conventional fib, of course," said he. "But it may have been the truth."

Miss Beth Anthony's small hand closed tight on her handkerchief.

"It wasn't! I know. Wait until you've heard. The result of the phone call only stiffened my resolve to find out from Marie Kilbourne where and in what circumstances Tom had taken leave of her. I got her address from the directory and jumped into a taxi.

"Another cab was standing in front of Mrs. Kilbourne's apartment house and I noticed that there was a trunk beside the driver and other luggage inside. It wasn't until this machine was moving that I caught a glimpse of its passenger. It was Marie.

"I rapped on the window and told my driver to follow; but we lost a few seconds in turning around and were caught by the traffic signal at the avenue. I knew I'd lost then and I gave up the chase. As soon as I could find a telephone, I called Mrs. Kilbourne's number again, changing my voice as much as I could and giving another name. This time I was told that Mrs. Kilbourne was out of the city. The maid wouldn't—said she *couldn't*—tell me where her mistress could be reached or when she would return."

MACUMBER had been regarding the girl, with sympathy as well as speculation in his eyes.

"What's your own opinion of the lady's actions?" he asked.

"I think," replied Miss Anthony, "that she knows something she's afraid to tell. Let me say again"—and now there was a proud little lift to her chin—"let me say again that nothing ever could shake my confidence in Tom Warburton. On my word, I'd be happy if I were certain that Marie Kilbourne had gone to meet him. At least I'd know he was safe then—and that there'd be a good explanation of it all I'd never doubt."

A rising admiration warmed the Great One's eyes.

"Young woman," he said softly, "permit me to say that you're one in a hundred thousand. And I'm happy to add that unless I'm more mistaken in Warburton than I've ever been in mortal man, your faith is not misplaced."

Macumber rose and fell to pacing the room.

"I think better on my feet, Miss Anthony," he murmured, and then after minutes of silence he said: "You're

right about Mrs. Kilbourne. Certainly you are! But I'm inclined to think that if Warburton has met with misadventure, her part in the matter would have been incidental and accidental. Suppose we put all thought of her aside for the while and consider——"

"The red-headed man!" cried Miss Anthony, and the color that had been coming slowly back into her cheeks left them again.

"No, I'd not be thinking of 'His grace, the Red Duke,' just now," said Macumber. "I'm not saying that Warburton would not have been in danger from him, but I see no reason to associate him here. There'll be a simpler answer, perhaps." He hesitated and asked quietly: "Miss Anthony, may I inquire if your father has become wholly reconciled to the engagement between you and Tom Warburton?"

The girl flushed.

"I know what's in your mind," she said. "It has been in my own."

"From which I am to judge that your answer to my question is 'Yes?'"

"I mean to say that dad is slow to make and slow to relinquish a plan. He had picked the man he wished me to marry—a man who has been in his employ for years and is now one of the executives of his company. This is a man I really like and respect. But I could never feel toward him as—as I do toward Tom. I've told dad that. It's his stubbornness, I think, that keeps him from understanding."

"Yet he consented to the engagement?"

"Reluctantly."

"Does he know what's happened—granting that anything worthy of worry actually has happened? I mean, have you communicated with him this morning?"

"Yes, I called him at the Ritz-Carlton, where we're stopping."

"And you told him what you've told me?"

"Not quite as much as I've told you. That is, I didn't mention Mrs. Kilbourne by name. But he did gather that Tom had set off with another partner. He tried to make capital of that. He sneered at Tom, said he was a 'spoiled puppy' and started to tell me once more how much more happiness I'd find as the wife of a man who 'could stand on his own feet.' Naturally, I wouldn't let him go on. I broke the connection."

"I'm going to put the question baldly, Miss Anthony. Do you think that perhaps your father——"

"No, I don't," interrupted the girl slowly. "In fact, I'm sure that what I told him was news to him."

"Very good, then!" snapped Macumber. "We'll wipe out one quite obvious possibility and go it blind. Again I'm trusting to your intuition, you'll observe. Our first step, of course, will be to look up this Mrs. Marie Kilbourne."

"But she's gone!" protested Miss Anthony. "Didn't I make that clear? However can you expect to find her? Do you mean you'll do nothing until she comes back? That we must all sit with folded hands and wait?"

The Great One smiled.

"Not necessarily. Where does Mrs. Kilbourne live, please?"

"In the Clarkson Apartments—just off Fifth Avenue in the street below the Waldorf-Astoria. But there's no use going there, Professor Macumber. You'll get no information."

"I'm hoping I won't have to go there. But I'm pleased with the location of the Kilbourne residence. It's interesting—even encouraging. Now, had it been just a few blocks farther uptown——"

"I don't see what difference that could make," interrupted Miss Anthony.

Macumber shrugged.

"Perhaps it doesn't make any. We'll see. Can you tell me the direction taken

by the taxi that carried Mrs. Kilbourne away?"

"I watched it until it was lost in the traffic. It turned into Fifth Avenue and went south."

"Thanks—and, for the moment, excuse me," said the Great One.

Beaming, he snatched up the newspaper which he had thrown aside at the girl's entrance and delved through its rear pages. One page of singularly dull aspect he scanned eagerly; then with a jubilant shout he was on his feet again, watch in hand.

"Run down and capture us a taxi, lad!" he cried. "We've less than no time to make the dock before the *Castledeane* sails off with Mrs. Kilbourne!"

WHEN Macumber and I were in our cab, coursing down an avenue darkened by the elevated-railway structure overhead and because of its many obstructing pillars shunned by traffic, I found the Great Macumber pleased enough with himself to be patient. Indeed, he overtly angled for the question which, mindful of a thousand and one past baitings, I might have held back.

"Undoubtedly you can see how I arrived at the conclusion that we'd find friend Marie aboard the *Castledeane?*" he remarked.

"Undoubtedly I can't," said I. Then a thought came to me. "But perhaps I can guess. You saw her name in a passenger list."

"Did I?" hooted Macumber. "And how would it get there, when the lady didn't make up her mind to clear out until hours after the paper was off the press? Let your peerless intelligence wrestle with that problem, youngster!"

Immediately I was reduced to my accustomed status of inferiority.

"The defense rests," I said meekly. "If you don't choose to come out with it, I'll forever hold my peace."

The Great One turned an expansive grin on me.

"I think," he said, "that I might have tried the *Castledeane* on general principles even had Mrs. Kilbourne lived miles farther uptown. But of course in the light of Miss Beth Anthony's revelations, we can be virtually certain that we're heading for the right port."

"Revelations!"

"Why, surely. Didn't she say that Mrs. Kilbourne's cab had gone south?"

"What has that to do with it?"

"Everything, lad. I did have a hunch, I'm frank to admit, that our lady would leave New York by ship rather than by train, once having made up her mind that she'd better go. People feel so much more secure with water between them and possible embarrassment, you know. But of course one could call that mere guesswork—a matter of odds."

"So just because Mrs. Kilbourne and her taxi travel south——"

"Precisely. Just because they travel south, I'm convinced that a dock's the destination. What's the block below the Waldorf, lad? Thirty-second Street, isn't it? And where would any sane person leaving New York City by train go but to the Pennsylvania Terminal or Grand Central? With Thirty-second Street and Fifth Avenue as a starting point, the lady would have gone to the north and west to reach one station, and to the north and east to reach the other, wouldn't she? Is it all so deep and dark now, youngster? Will the traveler find anything south of Thirty-second Street to travel on but steamships?"

In my sudden affliction I could not answer the Great One's smile.

"You have a faculty for making mysteries of simple things, maestro," I accused.

"Ah," said Macumber, "what is that but the magician's art? And who should know it better than yourself, after your years of apprenticeship?"

I passed that, and asked:

"And was the What's-her-name the only ship sailing this morning?"

"Indeed she wasn't," replied Macumber. "There were four others leaving besides the *Castledeane*."

"Then why pick her?"

The Great One yawned ostentatiously.

"The other sailings, lad, are for European ports. The *Castledeane* is going to Bermuda and her passengers require no passports. Would ye think now that Mrs. Marie Kilbourne had a passport up her sleeve?"

ALREADY our taxi was pulling up before a pier of the Acton-Bermuda line and, at the moment I stepped out, I could cheerfully have reconciled myself to disappointment. Or, to make my confession complete, I would have been disappointed not at all to learn that Macumber's whole structure of deduction was rooted in a fallacy—that Mrs. Kilbourne was neither aboard the *Castledeane* nor expected aboard.

But when I trotted up the gangway behind the Great One, that feeling had passed off entirely. Outwardly, I know, I must have exhibited more anxiety than he as he put his question to the purser. That functionary consulted his rack with a maddening leisureliness. Precious minutes passed. He scratched his head.

"Oh, Kilbourne!" said he. "Yes, that was the lady's name. Decided on the trip in such a hurry that she had to buy her passage aboard. She may be somewhere on deck, but No. 87 is her stateroom. Right below there, to your left."

It was a white face that peered through the grudgingly opened door a moment later to discover two strangers in the corridor. A voice that was pitifully strained addressed us:

"I think—I think you've made a mistake."

"Not if you're Mrs. Marie Kilbourne," said Macumber.

The woman's eyes widened as she shrank back and a slim, jeweled hand darted to her throat as if suddenly she had found herself choking.

"That is my name," she whispered, and, as Macumber stepped after her into the stateroom, she screamed: "Oh, my God! The police!"

IT was a de-luxe cabin which the last-minute voyager had gotten, one equipped not with the conventional berths but with a comfortable brass bed. Through a door standing ajar, I glimpsed the gleaming white of a private bath. Whatever her hurry, Mrs. Marie Kilbourne was journeying in style.

With that startled cry the woman had sunk back onto the bed. Her hands gripped the polished foot rail and she stared at the Great One with fascinated, terror-filled eyes. Normally, I could well imagine, she would have been handsome; now the horror in her face distorted her beauty.

"You're wrong, Mrs. Kilbourne," said Macumber quietly. "We are not connected with the police. I don't understand why you should have any such thought."

She showed no relief, but in the same tense and agonized voice demanded:

"Who are you, then? Why do you come to me?"

"We are friends of Mr. Thomas Warburton," replied the Great One. "And we hoped that you——"

Another scream cut him off. Then with a calm that seemed to suggest the imminence of a break, the woman lifted herself to her feet.

"If you're friends of Warburton's, you'll go now!" she gasped. "You'll ask no questions. It's too—too terrible to tell. Forget that you ever knew him —or saw me!"

"If the man is in trouble," Macumber told her, "I am not the one to desert him. Neither do I intend to bring

unhappiness to you. I came only to ask if you can tell me where Warburton is."

"I can't."

"But he was with you last night—and this morning?"

"Y-yes."

"Where did you last see him?"

"Must I tell you that?" There was desperation in the question.

"I think it would be better if you did," said the Great One gravely.

The haunted gray eyes of Mrs. Marie Kilbourne searched his face.

"In that case," she said, "I may as well tell you everything. I had no inkling of what was to happen, God knows! And if you're a friend of Mr. Warburton's, perhaps you'll be a friend to me. I need one. It has almost killed me not to be able to confide in anybody. And I think—I feel I can trust you."

"You can."

Macumber straightened. The warning call of the stewards was ringing through the ship:

"All 'shore that's goin' ashore!"

Mrs. Kilbourne waved a flashing hand.

"That's the first call," she said. "We have fifteen minutes. Do I have your promise that if I tell you all I know you—you won't try to detain me?"

"You have," Macumber replied, and bowed. "The idea is far from my mind."

SOME of the woman's constraint left her. She drew a cigarette from a golden case and lighted it.

"You knew that Mr. Warburton and I were together last night—or this morning, rather," she said. "But you must not infer anything from that. We were the most casual of acquaintances. I don't believe we had met more than three or four times before it was my very real misfortune to draw him for a partner in the Fenway Hospital treasure hunt.

"I suppose I do not need to tell you that we started from the St. Swithin. We went in a taxi and our first stop was the Ascot. There Mr. Warburton received—or I might better say *appeared* to receive—another clew card. The first clew had been absurdly simple to follow out; we had only to think of a big hotel whose name rhymed with the word 'mascot.' And the directions on the second card which Mr. Warburton showed me were plainer still. We were to stop our cab in Fifty-second Street, four doors west of Seventh Avenue, and my partner was to go around the corner and look for a man in a red cap."

Macumber nodded.

"I see, Mrs. Kilbourne. But perhaps we can dispense with details. What I'd like to know is why you tell me that Mr. Warburton *appeared* to receive this second clew. You stressed the word yourself."

"I did—and I'll explain. First know that we went to Fifty-second Street and Seventh Avenue. Mr. Warburton disappeared around the corner and then I had what seemed an interminable wait. Actually about twenty minutes had passed before he returned to the cab."

"He told you where he'd been?"

"He did—but that was scarcely necessary. He'd been drinking. And he confessed that the second card had been a hoax. Treasure hunting bored him, he said. He proposed that we might better spend our time dancing in a night club. I agreed that might be better fun and, as a reward, I was permitted to see the man in the red cap. It was the doorman of the Soirée Club, just around the corner from where I'd been left sitting."

"You say Warburton had been drinking—and showed it? That rather astonishes me, Mrs. Kilbourne."

"Oh, but he had! The odor of alcohol was strong on his breath—and I

could tell it in his voice as well. But of course in these days you know how most men are. I'll admit I thought less of the drinking than of the desertion, for I'd rather have been dancing than waiting alone in the taxi.

"I don't think we spent more than a half hour in the Soirée Club. Then Mr. Warburton suggested that we go to some quieter place. He was in costume, as you probably know, and said he felt conspicuous. Some one, I think, had mistaken him for an entertainer."

"And where did he propose to go?" asked Macumber.

"He didn't seem to know. I was surprised he was not better acquainted with New York night life, but he left it to me to make suggestions. I named three or four places and Mr. Warburton seemed to prefer the Club Basanove above the others. We went there, but again after a little he wanted to move on. He'd taken it into his head that we should visit the Cassino Club."

"Ah!" murmured Macumber. "I'm surprised again that he should have been known there!"

"But he wasn't."

"And you?"

"Nor I."

"Then I fancy you didn't go to the Cassino Club. From all I hear, it's the most exclusive night club in town."

"I knew that, but Mr. Warburton insisted. He said he had heard of the place and was bound to see it. I am quite well acquainted with Paul, the manager at the Club Basanove, and at Mr. Warburton's insistence I introduced him. I think that then he was far more under the influence than I dreamed.

"Paul sat with us to share a bottle of champagne and then Mr. Warburton persuaded him to call up the Cassino Club and vouch for us."

"So you did go there?"

"Yes."

"And after that?"

I COULD see the fear flare back in the woman's eyes. She halted and for a moment I thought she would not answer.

"We went nowhere else," she said softly, after a little. "I will tell you what happened in the Cassino Club."

"Warburton came to harm there!" Macumber burst out.

Mrs. Kilbourne shook her bobbed head.

"No, not Mr. Warburton. You seem to know of the club. Do you know Abe Blaustein then?"

"I would not say I knew him—only that for years I have been aware of him. I rate him as, bar one, the most for-r-midable criminal in New York. He is the new Ali Baba and his place, for all that people of society have elected to take it up, is a den of thieves.

"Mind, I'm making no stock jest in regard to his tariff. I speak literally, in sober earnest. Blaustein has surrounded himself with an aggregation of crooks second only in numbers and talent to that group which some call the Underworld Rotary. He aspires to the crown of crookdom and only one stands between him and the throne—this, a small and suave Englishman of whom I might tell you many interesting things if our time were not too short. But what of Abe Blaustein? Did Warburton have trouble with him?"

More softly still the woman replied: "I think you will call it trouble." A grim and tight smile played for an instant on her lips before she went on: "Well, I've gone so far and I might as well go the rest of the way. It will be so much off my mind, at any rate.

"Yes, we went to the Cassino Club. We had no trouble entering, for we were expected. Blaustein received us as honored guests. Mr. Thomas Warburton in the character of a clown seemed to amuse him. Or perhaps it was something in the idea. He knew who Warburton was, of course. What

man in that sort of business wouldn't welcome a son of Z. B. Warburton with open arms?

"And Warburton played the clown's part. I began to be sorry I hadn't had him take me home. He made a fool of himself, flung money right and left among the entertainers, the waiters, the orchestra. Blaustein stood back and laughed. Oh, the irony of that! They talk of people having a sixth sense. But there's no such thing, I tell you. No such thing. Where was Blaustein's sixth sense? How could he laugh?"

The widow of the treasure hunt laughed herself, helplessly, hysterically. Macumber touched her shoulder.

"Please—what happened? They're making the last call."

"I'm going to tell you what happened. I promised—and don't forget that you promised.

"It didn't take long for what money Warburton had with him to go. He wanted to cash a check. Blaustein didn't hesitate for a second. He knew who we were, you see. Paul, at Basanove's, had told him. And Paul is careful. He made sure before he called the Cassino Club that I positively knew Warburton was what he represented himself to be. Oh, he cross-questioned me—got me aside to do it. Warburton *had* to be 'right.'

"So of course the check of Z. B. Warburton's son was acceptable. Blaustein grinned and said that his signature would buy the whole place—anything else he had. They went back to Blaustein's private office together and Warburton wasn't steady on his feet when he went. I knew then that I'd better be getting home at once, made up my mind I'd go alone if I couldn't get Warburton out of the place.

"But in the couple of minutes he spent in the private office he seemed to have sobered. It was he who suggested we'd better move along. He had more money—paid a check of a little more than a hundred dollars with two hundred-dollar notes and never waited for change. As quickly as I can tell it, we were in the street.

"We had kept the same cab through the morning, the same one we'd started from the St. Swithin in. Mr. Warburton had told the driver to wait. I heard him. But now the cab wasn't in sight. Warburton said the man had probably drawn around the corner. He promised to find him and bring him back.

"Again he left me; again I waited. A few minutes passed. Then I heard a commotion on the stairs behind me. People were running down from the Cassino Club. A man whom I had taken to be the head waiter or assistant manager led them. He recognized me and caught me by the arm.

"He shouted in my ear: 'Where's your friend?' The man's voice frightened me. I tried to pull away from him.

" 'He went to look for our cab a little bit ago,' I said. 'Went around the corner there. I don't think I'll wait for him any longer. Get a machine for me, please.'

"But the man who held my arm only tightened his grip.

" 'No, you'll have to come back upstairs,' he said. 'I want to talk to you.'

"He spoke to the men who had followed him. They went racing around the corner and then I was dragged—*dragged*—into the club again. The place was in a turmoil. Women were rushing into their wraps. The orchestra was playing, but there was something wrong with the music. The musicians' eyes weren't on their notes. They were craning toward the door through which I'd seen Mr. Warburton go with Blaustein.

"I was questioned, forced to identify myself. Some one even called up the Club Basanove and I was made to speak with Paul over the telephone so he could tell them the voice was Mrs. Kil-

bourne's. And then at last they took me through that door which every one was watching. It led into a dark corridor and, off the corridor, another door opened.

"That was the private office. I screamed when they pushed me into the room. Almost fainted. Blaustein—who'd been laughing just a little while ago at the clowning of a rich man's son—who'd rubbed his hands as the yellowbacks flew—was sitting there at his desk. Half lying on it, for he'd slipped forward in his chair. And the handle of a hunting knife stood out between his shoulder blades. The horror of it!"

"And Blaustein was dead?" demanded Macumber.

"How could he have lived? They had sent for a doctor, but I didn't hear what he said. They let me go as he was coming in."

"The police?"

"I saw none. It was the one thing I had to be thankful for."

The Great One stood staring at her.

"Warburton," he said grimly, "had nothing to do with the killing of Abe Blaustein. I'd stake my own life on that. Come, do *you* think he did, Mrs. Kilbourne?"

The woman looked up at him. An answer trembled on her lips, but it was inaudible. She nodded. Faintly now, from the main deck, came the last warning to the shore going. Macumber flung open the stateroom door and shoved me into the narrow paneled corridor before him. At the threshold he turned.

"Tell me why! Quickly! In a word!"

Mrs. Kilbourne's face became as white as it had been when she responded to our fateful rap.

"I wouldn't have told you this," she said unsteadily. "You force me. I saw it first as he left me and did not know what to think. On the white of his costume, in front, showing through his topcoat, there was a stain. A crimson stain—a stain too red for wine!"

THE first editions of the evening newspapers were on the streets as the Great Macumber and I left the Bermuda pier. Macumber hailed a boy and our eyes must simultaneously have caught the deep-typed banner line on the first paper to emerge from the bundle beneath the youngster's arm:

ABE BLAUSTEIN SLAIN BY RICH REVELER!

This paper, I observed, was the most sensational of the afternoon dailies; but even so the more conservative contemporaries carried the news of the "Blaustein murder" and all agreed that the police were seeking the son of a Western millionaire in connection with the crime.

As we taxied uptown, Macumber ran hastily through the various accounts, tossing the papers over to me one after the other when he had finished with them. By the time we had reached the Rawley, he had extracted one solitary grain of comfort from his reading.

"At least, lad," he said, "no one's had the temerity to mention Tom Warburton by name. So things might be worse."

It was beyond me to share his optimism.

"I don't see how," I said glumly. "Warburton certainly has got himself into the devil's own mess and I can't see anything better for him to do than to come forward and give himself up. Certainly a man who's had too much of the stuff the night clubs sell for its weight in gold can't be held accountable for his actions. Lord, but it's almost impossible to believe!"

The Great One surveyed me with astonishment.

"What's that?" he cried. "Oh, tush!

D'ye think Tom Warburton would dirty his hands on Blaustein, much less redden 'em?"

"I didn't think so until the very moment we were leaving the *Castledeane*," said I.

"What did you think, lad?"

"That Blaustein was killed, of course, by some one who slipped into his office directly after Warburton had left."

"For a time I considered that possibility mysel'." Macumber nodded.

"But the blood on him!" said I.

"Aye, the blood!" echoed the Great One. "That's what has my mind chasing off on another track. If we could get the man who drove the taxi, now. If only we could lay a hand upon him!"

"The man who drove which taxi?"

"The one that took Warburton and Mrs. Kilbourne from the St. Swithin."

"What has he to do with it?"

"I'm thinking, lad, that he holds a key to unlock any prison that Tom Warburton is in—or ever gets into. But the question is: Can we find him? There will be a stand of company cabs at the St. Swithin, I fancy, and it might not be difficult to trace the machine that carried away a fare who was dressed like Harlequin. Suppose we have luncheon and take a run over."

We took a quick meal in the Rawley grill, after which Macumber made two phone calls. One put him in touch with poor little Beth Anthony, whom he had prevailed upon to return to the Ritz-Carlton and rest.

"I saw Mrs. Kilbourne and assuredly there's nothing to worry about," I heard him tell her. "No, I can't give you details now. Please don't ask. All I'm privileged to tell you is that Tom is—detained. No, it's no euphemism. That's the fact, upon my word."

The second call brought Macumber no news when he had been put through to the University Club. Warburton was not there, nor had he been heard from.

WHEN we were on our way at last to the St. Swithin, I remonstrated.

"But we're wasting our time, maestro!" I said. "It's the night crew of the taxi service we'll have to see. There'll be another set of drivers on now."

"Certainly there will be," the Great One agreed amiably. "But night workers have homes, haven't they? By visiting the night starter at his home, we may save many precious hours—vital hours, it may be."

And so we did. At the St. Swithin cab office we got the address of the man we wanted to see and, within fifteen minutes, had found him.

"I remember there was two gents dressed like clowns that come from the ball," he told us, between prodigious forkfuls of wheat cakes and sausage. "No, only one of 'em went in a Triple-Stripe cab—him and his lady. The other Joey and *his* gal blew off with a strange bucker that butted onto the line with a liv'ry rig.

"What's a liv'ry rig? Well, mister, you remember in the old days how a guy that didn't have his own horse and cab could hire one at so much a night? It's the same idea, only with taxis. If I ain't mistaken, this bird that took away the second clown got his rig off of the Grimshaw Garage, over at Tenth Avenue and Forty-fourth Street. Yep, I could be sure of that. I give him a good look, because he just about yanked the gent in. Only except there was another gent present that seemed to be one of the ball officials, I'd 'a' said somethin' hot. The St. Swithin stand belongs to th' Triple-Stripe Company, see? An' we pay plenty for it.

"The driver, hey? Well, mister, he looked like a thug if I ever see one. Thickset, he was, with a jaw pushin' out like a batterin'-ram and a cast in his eye. Wore a coat with shiny buttons on it—somethin' like a uniform, but not quite."

On we went from the home of the taxi starter to the garage in Tenth Avenue. And there again Macumber scored. The patron with the shiny buttons and the introspective eyes was remembered. He had paid for his cab and his gas in advance and had turned in the "rig" hours before he was due to return it.

"I was on when he come in," said the day superintendent. "Never seen him before, that I can rec'lect. Must 'a' been the first time he done business with us."

"Would you recognize him if you ever were to see him again?" queried Macumber.

"Guess I would."

"And do you think you'd know a picture of him if you saw that?"

"Might. Say, what's he wanted for? Doin' up a fare?"

"That could be one way of putting it," replied the Great One. "By the way, my friend, I know where some pictures can be found. If you can spare an hour, I'd like to pay you about ten times as much as you make here for looking at them. You're interested? Then hop into my taxi outside, please, and we'll be going."

As the cab was passing the Rawley corner, Macumber dropped me.

"Better," said he, "for one of us to stand by at the hotel. Miss Anthony may be calling—even Warburton himself. As for me, you'll either see me or hear from me in the course of an hour."

Whither the Great One was bound, he didn't have to tell me. Police headquarters and the rogues' gallery would be his objectives, of course, and he was hoping that there his companion could single out the likeness of the wall-eyed thug who had driven Warburton to Abe Blaustein's Cassino Club.

If the man's picture was on file, if the police were acquainted with him and if he was still in New York, I had little doubt that Macumber's friends of the detective bureau would speedily unearth him.

But what then? What could the Great One expect to gain from questioning the fellow? How would he possibly have connection with or knowledge of a crime that had been committed behind the closely guarded doors of a law-breaking night club while he stood awaiting his fares at the curb?

A sudden thought came as I pondered the problem. Mrs. Kilbourne had missed the cab when she came from the club. Tom Warburton had gone in search of it and hadn't come back.

Now it was clear to me: Macumber believed that Tom had found the taxi and had fled in it—fled into hiding. And that meant he secretly believed Warburton guilty!

I WAS weighing the significance of that startling conclusion, wondering just what course the Great One would take if he did find his way to Warburton when the telephone rang.

"I think," said the crackling voice of Macumber, "that I am exactly on the hour. D'ye mind where the old Tenderloin police station is, lad? That's where I'm calling from. Come as quickly as you can—and come armed!"

I knew the venerable station house well. It was no more than half a dozen blocks from the Rawley. In less than ten minutes I was greeting Captain Michael Gillicuddy, an official who more than once had spoken highly in my presence of the qualities of Macumber's mind.

"Himself," said Michael, "is in the squad room, passin' the time with a game of checkers. Just go back—no, ye can stay here. They're comin' now!"

The station door had opened and two men had entered. One towered a head above the other and wore the black telescope hat that plain-clothes men of the old school seem to have pledged

themselves to cling to through the round of the seasons. My gaze went to the second man and by his eyes I knew him. Though we now stood a distance apart, he had fixed Gillicuddy and me with the one baleful glare.

"Hullo, Barney!" sang out the captain. "It's an old customer you've brought us, I see. What's 'Mister Crisscross' been up to now? Another stick-up, is it?"

"Just saw him," replied the detective, "and thought he'd be good company to walk in with."

"What's he got on him?"

"Ain't frisked him yet, cap. I know better'n do that until I've got witnesses. Never have any more yeggs hollerin' frame-up at me."

The "company," grinning, opened up a vista of stained and snaggy teeth.

"I'm clean," he said. "G'wan and frisk me. You won't find nothin'. Think I'm a sap to be goin' heeled?"

"I hope you're tellin' the truth," asserted Michael Gillicuddy. "A gun in your pocket'd mean a twenty-year stretch this time—and the overcrowdin' at Sing Sing is just awful the way it is, I see by the papers."

I heard a step behind me. Macumber had come from the squad room. The captain turned to him.

"Mister," he said, "I wonder if you'd do us a favor."

"What is it, captain?"

"This man here—we call him 'Crisscross' in th' neighborhood—has just been brought in on suspicion. We ain't got anything on him, see, unless *he's* got somethin' on him. Get what I mean? What I'd like is for somebody that ain't a member of the police department to search him. I don't want to give him a chance to pull that old stuff on a jury about th' cops framin' him."

"I understand," said the Great One. "And I'll be glad to oblige."

He walked briskly to the grinning Crisscross and lifted his empty hands so all might see.

"To be on the safe side," said he, "I'll direct attention to the fact that I start the search barehanded. It would never do for *me* to be accused of—ah, what's *this?*"

The Great One had begun his "frisking" in routine fashion by patting the prisoner's hips. Now a hand darted under the man's coat and came forth clutching an evil-looking little pistol. Curtains closed on the dental display of Mr. Crisscross.

"Framed!" he screamed. "It's murder! I'll die if I go back!"

"Save the sobs for the jury," advised Michael Gillicuddy. "In the meantime walk into my office and we'll all talk heart to heart."

For fifteen minutes then I leaned against the station desk and cooled my heels while Macumber, Gillicuddy and the black-hatted detective forgathered socially with the man Crisscross in the captain's room. When the four reappeared, I saw the wall-eyed chap started on his way to a cell. Gillicuddy walked with him as far as the squad-room door.

"If it turns out you steered us right," I heard him say, "I'm going to forget it. You'll be turned loose as soon as I know and you'll stay loose as long as you can keep straight. Savvy?"

The Great One came to me smiling.

"A pistol's harder to palm than an egg, lad," said he, "but ye see it can be done. I'll illustrate the trick when we've more leisure. For the present we go traveling ahead—aye, and before us I see the end of the rainbow and a setting, red, red sun!"

I observed, as we started away, that Michael Gillicuddy was climbing up beside the driver of a large touring car which had been standing outside the station house and that the tonneau was filling with the several wide-shouldered men who had been witnesses to Macumber's potent magic.

THIS car I saw again later when our taxi had left the Great One and me at the entrance to a neat little red-brick street that might have taken its cleanliness and calm from the river sparkling beyond the iron rail which made it a cul-de-sac. This car had stopped near us and its passengers were taking position at the head of our street and the street below.

Macumber, walking on, scanned the numbers on the doors.

"For sure, lad," said he, "it'll be the house against the river. That's well. No worry about an escape *that* way. D'ye know what's beyond? Hell Gate —and a current just here that no swimmer could live in. Whirlpools and the like. It's a location made to order for the end of the drama. In a moment, I'll gamble, we'll be facing an old friend. Have ye firearms? Good! Then be ready. I'm looking for no tame surrender."

The Great One would have made himself clearer had he addressed me in Greek, little though I retain of the classic tongue. But now was no time for elucidation. Already he was ascending the narrow, iron-railed stoop of a house whose wall rose sheer from the concreted embankment against which the Hell Gate race lashed itself into swirling froth.

Macumber's finger touched the bell button. Within the house sounded three long rings, two short rings and another long one. Footsteps approached. That sound ceased for a moment. Then there was a click and the door opened. In the same instant, the Great One flung himself against it.

Later he had told me he expected a resisting pressure. But there was none. I saw him sprawling headlong and leaped into the dim hall after him. Where we were or what Macumber expected to find here, I could only guess; but whatever and wherever, ours had been a singularly inauspicious entrance. My hand went to the pocket that held my pistol. It never got there. A voice stayed it on the way—that and the feel of something blunt and ominous pressing against my back.

"How fortunate you find me at home!" was what the voice said.

A light overhead flashed on. With arms instinctively lifting, I wheeled to face the person who, at that moment and in those circumstances, was beyond quibble the last man in the world I'd have chosen to meet.

IT seemed to me a jestful working of Fate then that the Red Duke should have been standing in that precise attitude which he had held when first I saw him. With thumb and forefinger of his left hand, he fondled an end of his mustache that was a blazing needle. In his right hand, gripped easily and yet efficiently, was an automatic as dapper as himself and as deadly. And that old Satanic wistfulness masked the icy blue of his eyes.

"So—it's *you!*" I somehow got out.

Behind me, I heard Macumber scrambling to his feet. The pistol began to wave lazily and I looked about to see the Great One in the same unhappy posture as mine. His hands were up.

His grace raised his crimson and delicately arching brows.

"You didn't know I lived here? Really? Can it be to accident I owe the honor? No, no! That is too cruel. My feelings, gentlemen! And how my heart leaped when I recognized you through my peephole! Oh, indeed we must be careful! I assure you I'd not have admitted everybody."

The Great One spoke up, almost casually.

"Got young Warburton here, haven't you, Chyvers?"

A shadow flitted across the Red Duke's face.

"So *that's* what you've come about!"

he murmured. "Macumber, you force me to say that I'm annoyed with you—quite seriously annoyed. Why can't a man with a splendid business like yours pay more attention to it? You could have made something of yourself if you'd stuck to magic. I really mean it; I consider you an artist. History might have ranked you with Robert Houdin. But you must run about—ah—isn't the States colloquialism 'butting in?' Yes, Warburton is here. But what use the information is going to be to you, I can't see. I'd advise you to get ready to hitch your wagon to a star, Macumber. Otherwise it's going to be a devilish far drop through space."

As he spoke, his grace had slipped behind us and deftly possessed himself of our guns. Now he leaned over a banister that ran along the hall and nonchalantly dropped them into the basement.

"With temptation out of the way," said he, "what else about Warburton?"

"I don't think there's anything you can tell me," replied the Great One placidly, "that I don't know already."

"No?"

"Really not. It was clever, Chyvers. In my humble opinion, one of the very best things you've done. To settle two scores at once—ah, but that's genius! I've always held you've had it in you!"

His grace tested the point of his mustache with a fond finger.

"I dare say you're not in a mood to grant me a favor, Macumber," he remarked. "But I am deucedly curious to know how you got your ideas in this matter. I'm not going to ask you to tell me. That would scarcely be sporting. But I can at least suggest that I'm willing to listen. And a few minutes more of life would be acceptable, don't you think? Anything might happen while they're ticking away. One never knows!"

"One never does," agreed the Great One. "Mind, I'm not expecting much of the damnable luck that got the shoe on this foot, but I can't resist laying you out for trusting any detail of so excellent a scheme to a stupid ass like Crisscross Tibbs."

The Red Duke's face displayed pain.

"Oh, Crisscross!" He sighed. "I might have guessed it. But you do me an injustice, Macumber. He was picked by one of my excellent associates. Tell you the truth, I never did like the fellow's eyes. I fancy Mr. Tibbs is talking yet?"

"He'll talk more if necessary. Never saw a man more anxious to please."

"Thanks for the information. So the police are in on the game, eh?"

"They are."

"But you saved *me* for your personal attention? Oh, vainglorious and rash Macumber! But, since you're here for the nonce, at least, I'd relish more details in regard to Tibbs. You gathered from him——"

"In the first place that the noble Prince Voulopoff, who served on the starting committee for the Fenway Hospital treasure hunt this morning, is an acquaintance of yours."

His grace grinned.

"Indeed he is! A charming and polished fellow, though deucedly down on his luck. We've been mutually helpful from time to time."

"It was most accommodating of him to steer Warburton into Mr. Tibbs' cab. And I fancy it was he who suggested the clown costume, wasn't it? Ah, I thought so! It was ideal for the purpose."

"Quite so."

"Is there any use going over the rest of it? Oh, if you wish, your grace. You did have a score to even with Warburton, after all, and of course there were reasons why you wanted Blaustein out of the way. Threatening that a little bird would perch on Inspector Clancy's shoulder and whisper things,

wasn't he? Yes, yes—there's no room in New York for a Chyvers and a Blaustein.

"And you decided quite rightly that something must happen to the little bird. But how to get at it? There was Blaustein in his castle—a king who couldn't be approached. Only people with irreproachable credentials, or associated with his own crowd, might enter the Cassino Club. So long as he stayed indoors, Blaustein was safe, beyond your reach. And he'd not have had to expose himself to tell his sprightly story to Clancy, either. Bless us, no! Just a phone call would have brought the good inspector on the run. And you didn't know just when that phone call would be made. Most embarrassing, your grace.

"But what, after all, were the defenses of the Cassino Club to one like yourself? You think and scheme and in conversation with Voulopoff, perhaps, dawns the great idea. Warburton comes to the Junior Masque as a clown; as a clown he is put into the taxi you want him in. The driver halts beside a certain gentleman outside the Hotel Ascot—a good friend of yours, eh?

"By this gentleman, Warburton is presented with a clew card that the committee for the treasure hunt has had nothing to do with. Obediently he leaves the cab, according to directions. He walks around a corner, meets a man in a red cap. The man has still another taxi. Warburton is invited to enter it. He thinks this is part of the treasure-hunt game. The cab fetches him here. He is invited now to step in. To him it's more of the game. He does step in—and something hits him on the head. Was that it?"

His grace nodded.

"You're doing surprisingly well, Macumber. Warburton wasn't hurt. Only the slightest of concussions. You interest me. Go on!"

"Well, now," resumed the Great One calmly, "a very few words will serve. Warburton's costume is stripped from him. Some one of his build or thereabouts puts it on. His face is floured and painted as Tom's was painted. The one thing he carries in the way of added equipment is a knife which he hopes to get a chance to use.

"This fellow returns to Tom Warburton's partner. He *is* Warburton to her. He accounts for his absence and any change in his voice she may notice —does it neatly, I may say. And through her he gets into the Cassino Club, finally into Abe Blaustein's private office. Whereupon the deed is done. Within a minute after the murder, he's in the cab driven by Crisscross and is on his way here. Who shall we say killed Blaustein? Would any jury in the world refuse to believe it was Warburton? Especially when Warburton doesn't come forward for a couple of days and then offers a wild alibi? Who'd be willing to swallow the story that he'd been held prisoner in a house that he couldn't lead the police to?"

Again his grace smiled.

"It did look like an excellent case. I'd never wish to be prosecuted on one as strong."

"Aye," said Macumber, "but you're going to be. No matter what becomes of the lad and me, the chair'll be waiting for you this time. You've been crisscrossed and double crisscrossed by Crisscross Tibbs. The police have the name of the man who killed Blaustein —before the day's over, they'll have the man. Even now this block's surrounded. I didn't come alone, Chyvers, not I. You're fair caught. Ah, d'ye think you'll be able to stroll through the lines?"

His grace had backed to the hall rack. A jaunty gray fedora now hid all but a rear fringe of his close-cropped, crisp red hair.

"I'm going to say good-by, gentlemen," he said. "Perhaps none of us will need a hat where we're going. Till we meet again!"

THE pistol lifted and Macumber sprang. The bullet tore off the Great One's hat. They grappled; then it was his grace who went flying—up the stairs, three at a time. The Great One had secured the gun. It spat twice as the Red Duke turned the upper landing. He kept on.

Pell-mell after him went Macumber and I. As we darted past a room on the second floor, I saw a figure, trussed and gagged, lying on a narrow bed. But I pounded on after Macumber. A few minutes more as a partridge would do Tom Warburton no harm.

It flashed on me as I ran that Chyvers was reputed to have been a sprinter of note in his Oxford days. I knew he was outdistancing us. There was a bang of the roof scuttle as we came to the top floor. His grace, at least, had gained the open. So, in thirty seconds more, had we, the Great One and I.

And we were alone on the housetops. We searched among the chimneys. Then some impulse led me to look over the coping at the river end of the row. I called out and pointed a trembling finger at a dapper gray fedora dancing on the froth.

"The duke's!" I whispered. "This is the way he went!"

"Finis!" breathed the Great Macumber.

Other stories by Mr. Rohde will be published in forthcoming issues of POPULAR.

NEWS OF THE SPANISH ARMADA

THE business of historical research is normally among the lowest-paid professions. But there is one bit of historical research that has gone forward off the coast of Scotland and that promises rich profits. For some time past, an English salvage expedition has been operating in the Bay of Tobermory, seeking to raise the treasure that is supposed to have gone down in sixty feet of water aboard the treasure galleon, *Almirante de Florencia*, that fled following the defeat of the Spanish Armada and took refuge in the Scotch port: Scotland at that time being independent and a neutral country.

Ancient report has it that treasure in the form of specie and jewels amounting in value to nearly two million dollars went to the bottom when the *Almirante de Florencia* blew up and sank. How the treasure ship happened to blow up is not recorded, but it is believed that her captain, despairing of escape through the English blockade, deliberately set a fuse to her powder magazine. Only two men of her crew of three hundred and sixty-five are reported by tradition to have escaped.

The wreck of the old Spanish warship lies buried under thirty feet of clay and silt. The salvagers are using powerful suction pumps capable of taking up and discharging two hundred and fifty tons of sea bottom an hour in their effort to clear the wreck for diving operations. At last reports they had reached the timbers of the galleon and brought to the surface a section of one of her masts.

So far the actual treasure recovered and sifted from the débris brought to the surface by the suction pumps is small. It consists of a bronze cannon, some pieces of silverware, a handful of gold buttons and fragments of human skeletons. Ralph Paine has told the story of the *De Florencia* in his "Book of Buried Treasure."

A Chat With You

EVERY one who works for a living —and every one does in some fashion or another—is entitled to his times of relaxation. We were about to say enjoyment, but as a matter of fact there is as much enjoyment in work as there is in anything. Yet "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," so what will Jack do when he plays? And how much shall he pay for his play? Let us consider.

Suppose he goes for diversion to a big boxing contest or prize fight. He may, or may not, get thrills out of it. Anyway, he pays from five up to fifty dollars for an exhibition lasting at the most three quarters of an hour or so. And if it is the real thing, it is so fast and subtle that his eye can scarce follow it.

* * * *

BIG-LEAGUE baseball? On the whole you get more for your money in that. Also you get the benefit of the open air. But who, who has not played baseball himself, really gets the authentic stuff that is happening on the diamond? And how easy it is to fake a game so that while it is no contest it seems like the real thing!

All right! Pass that up. Let us try some entertainment more highbrow than athletics. Grand opera? You are lucky if you are able to get a seat at all for much less than six dollars. If you go to a popular musical comedy it is extremely unlikely that you will get seats at the box office—and so you go to the speculator, and it may cost you seven dollars.

The movies? From twenty-five cents up to two fifty.

Now what else is there? The straight drama in any big town costs almost as much as musical comedy.

* * * *

NOW we submit that for entertainment, recreation and general relaxation of the mind and soul there is nothing quite so good as a good light, a comfortable chair or couch and something good to read. When we were young, perhaps the finest hours we ever spent were up in an attic with a book and an apple. We forget the apples. They may have been Mackintosh Reds or Baldwins or Tallman Sweets or what not. But we remember the books. "Davy and the Goblin," "The Admiral's Caravan," "Little Lord Fauntleroy," "Sara Crewe"—there are a dozen others that come back to us. The habit of reading is something inexorable. Some few recover from it. But we never really liked that sort of folk. The born reader of fiction is one of the elect. "For he," as Coleridge has remarked, "on honey dew hath fed, and drunk the milk of Paradise."

* * * *

AS nearly as we can compute it, the fastest and most insistent reader could not complete a number of this magazine in much less than nine or ten hours. All the other forms of entertainment we have mentioned hold the attention something less than three hours for each performance. We are assuming that you read the magazine through from cover to cover. But perhaps you skip one or two of the stories. Even then it is eight hours at the shortest.

That's as fast as we can read—and we can read as fast as most.

DID it ever occur to you that there are a variety of ways of being interested in anything you read? You read the morning paper. You note that the stock market has gone up, that the well-organized political machines have carried the municipal election. These things are interesting after their fashion. But what kind of interest is it? A mild, lukewarm sort of thing. Not enough to make you miss a single spoonful of your morning coffee.

* * * *

THERE is quite another type of interest in reading. There is the story, the running imagery of which unwinds before your mental vision like a rapidly unrolling ball of yarn. You hurry, hurry as you read it. You have no time to pause to taste the savor of the phrases or note the art of the author. You turn the page impatiently. The interest is in this—what happens next? How did it come out? Did he escape? Did he win his fortune? Did he get the girl? This is decidedly a greater thrill than the newspaper.

* * * *

THERE is still another type of interest. This is the attention aroused by a story so human, so moving, so intense in its drama and true in its depiction of character that one reads with the heart as well as with the eye and brain. When you must lay the magazine aside for a moment to think of what you have read, when it is not what is going to happen next that matters so much, but what is happening now, when you hate to turn the page just as you hate to reach the end of a perfect day.

It would be comparatively easy in a magazine to give you the sort of interest that we catalogued first. The two others are harder to achieve—and yet we can promise them in some sort in every issue. The third, of course, is the hardest of all. It is the stuff of which masterpieces are made. If we had our wish, were this the magazine of our dreams, it would be all compact of it. But you'll get it now and then. As often as we can compass it.

* * * *

THE complete two-dollar book in the next issue is "Rubies," by L. Adams Beck. We think it a great story of adventure and romance. The other authors in the same issue are Howard R. Marsh, Charles R. Barnes, Charles Neville Buck, Ralph D. Paine, Roy W. Hinds, J. H. Greene and Calvin Johnston. You know them all—or, if you don't, you should know them, for they are worth knowing.

"I enjoy seeing a man smoke a pipe. It seems so peaceful"... Elsie Janis

For Christmas An Ingersoll

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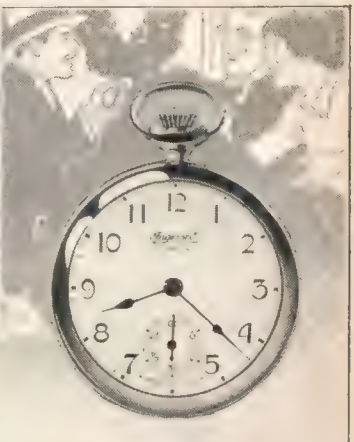
Dependable, as always, but with many new features of grace and beauty. $1.75

Yankee Radiolite

The Yankee with Radiolite figures and hands. Tells time in the dark. $2.75



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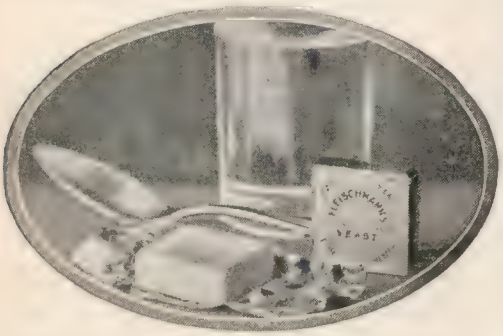
Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-23, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



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ANNE M. CREMIN, New Haven, Conn.

"I AM AN OFFICER in the Merchant Marine. Day and night, in fair weather and in foul, duty confines me to the bridge. Unceasing vigilance calls for sustained alertness of faculties. This means keeping clean inside and out. Two years ago I discovered Fleischmann's Yeast. To its daily use from that time do I ascribe my present condition of physical well-being. I have proved it to be an efficacious intestinal cleanser—wonderfully invigorating. This food keeps fresh for days in the refrigerator. I restock at all ports of call. I enjoy a clear skin, fine appetite, an orderly stomach and improved eyesight—further benefits directly traceable to the proper use of Fleischmann's Yeast."

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That's what the big, robust two-fisted fellows of strength, muscle and health are saying to the weakling—the weak, narrow-chested chap with the shifty eyes, who cannot concentrate and who just cannot carry on in this battle of life, where only the strongest survive.

Look here, young fellow, just sit down and think this thing over. Are ou going through life taking orders and obeying the commands of the other men? Do you want to be stepped over and left on the bottom of the pile with the ringing cry in your ears "Get Off the Earth."

DEAD OR ALIVE

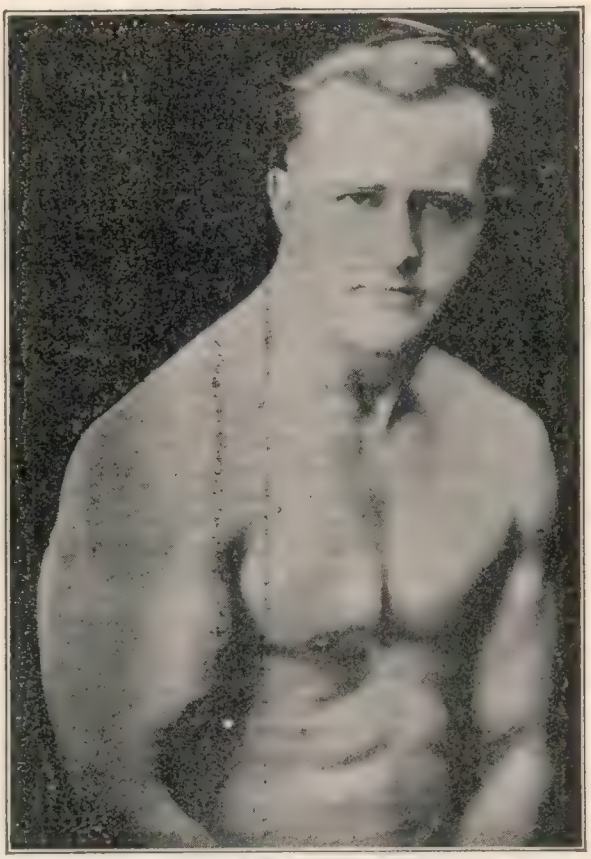
Do you awake in the morning with the dread of the day's work ahead of you and after managing to perform your duties, you go trudging home with drooping shoulders and dead tired—good for nothing but the bed, OR—

Do you awaken fully refreshed, tickled to death to be alive? Do you spring out of bed thrilling with vitality and anxious and ready to meet your responsibilities with that spirit that "cannot be beat"? **That's living!**

Let me repair that body of yours. *I am a muscle builder.* I build *energy.* I make *go-getters.* I make live *he-men.* I will clear your brain and put that healthy sparkle in your eye. Then you can tell the whole world you will come out on top when it's all over. Before you realize it, people will begin noticing you. They won't pass you by again. Opportunities will spring up and you will start climbing the ladder of success. I will make you a big, broad shouldered, two-fisted fellow who gets there. Everyone will like you. Only the fellow who is alert, wide-awake, gets the opportunities. Your abundant strength and thrilling vitality will stimulate your ambition and fire you on until you are bound to succeed.

HEY—WAKE UP

How do you expect to go through life half dead, half alive—a sort of "half-man," who cannot stand out from the crowd? Come on, straighten those shoulders, broaden that back. Do something to fill out that suit of yours—GET SOME MUSCLE. In thirty days or even less I *guarantee* to add one full inch to your arms, yes two more inches to your chest. Not only that but you will begin to live all over again. You will breathe deeper, sleep like a rock, enjoy every mouthful of food you eat. You will feel and act altogether like a new person and that's only the beginning. That's where you start. From then on your progress will amaze you. You will wonder why in the world you have been asleep so long. And remember, fellows, I absolutely guarantee to do these things for you and guarantee them in the fullest sense of the word. You will feel like shouting to the whole world—"I am a man and I can prove it." What do you say? Do you want to go on dragging yourself about or do you want big robust life which is a real he-man's body and power? Are you with me fellows? Hot dog! Let's go.



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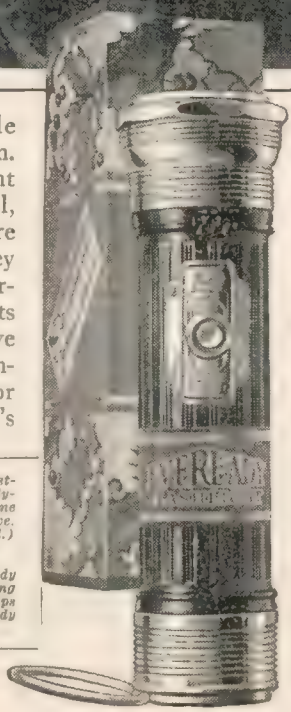

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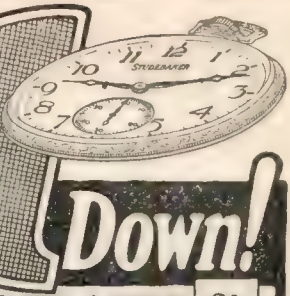

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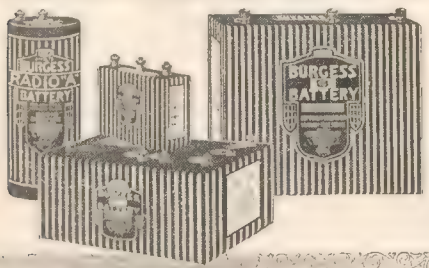

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They had expected it.

Then, as the plans for their marriage were well along, he came to her one day and told her the engagement would have to be broken.

It came to her like a thunder-bolt out of a clear sky.

"But why?" she asked.

He turned his head. It was something he could not bring himself to discuss.

* * *

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Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some deep-seated organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a local condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as a mouth wash and gargle. It is an interesting thing that this well-known antiseptic that has been in use for years for surgical dressings, possesses these unusual properties as a breath deodorant. It puts you on the safe and polite side.

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This safe and long-trusted antiseptic has dozens of different uses; note the little circular that comes with every bottle. Your druggist sells Listerine in the original brown package only—*never in bulk*. There are four sizes: 14 ounce, 7 ounce, 3 ounce and 1¼ ounce. Buy the large size for economy. —*Lambert Pharmacal Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.*

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Poor old Jules Verne! When he wrote his famous book, "Around the World in Eighty Days" he thought he was going some. There was a flight for you—but in his mind it was a flight of imagination that never could be achieved by mortal man. *And now you read,*

"Around the World in Eighty Hours"

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Speed and more speed—that's the thrilling keynote of this story that begins with a wager of half a million dollars on a race 'round the world by airplane. Adventure is piled on adventure as the stalwart airmen start on their history-making flight. Go zooming up with David Whitley, late of the U. S. government service as he races across the air lanes, as he is forced to land in hostile territory, as he circumvents the tricks of his rivals. You'll have the time of your life with this book and you'll be telling all your friends about it before you are through. It's a "CH" book and that means good reading wherever you see that famous brand on a book jacket. Ask your dealer to-day about the popular copyrights, popularly priced and published by

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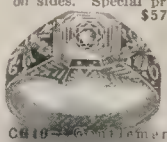

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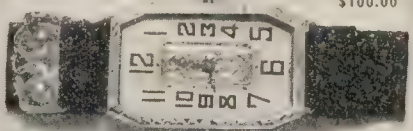

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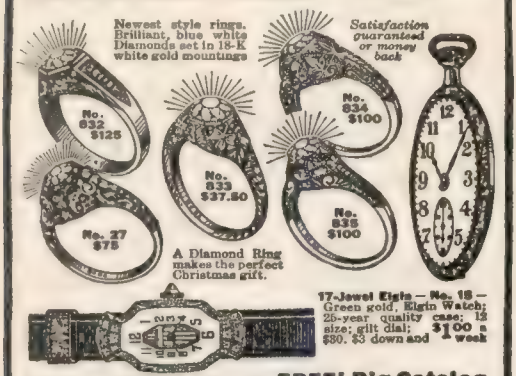

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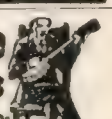

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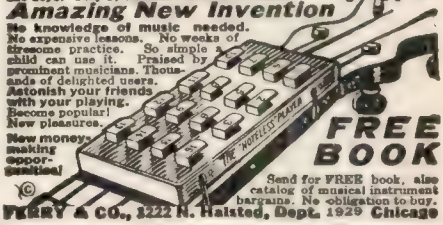

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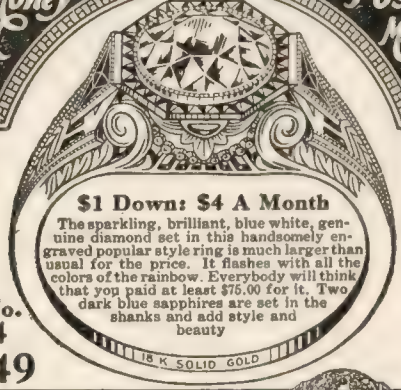

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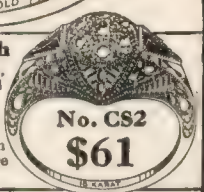

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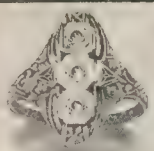

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